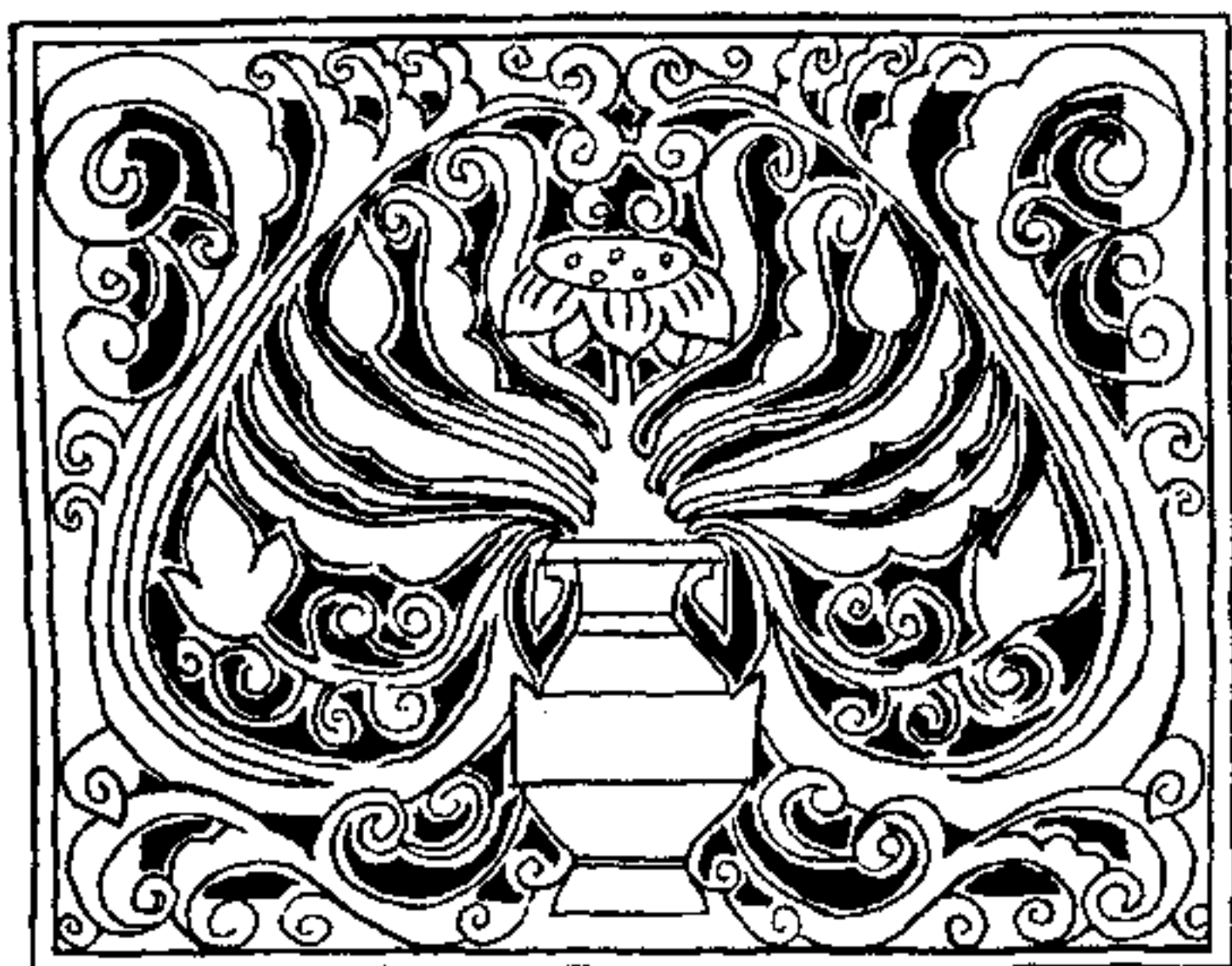




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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 103

FEBRUARY 1998

No. 2

Divine Wisdom

THE COMPLETION OF DAKSHA'S SACRIFICE
(Hymns in Praise of Sri Hari)

दक्ष उवाच
शुद्धं स्वधाम्न्युपरताखिलबुद्ध्यवस्थं
चिन्मात्रमेकमभयं प्रतिषिध्य मायाम्।
तिष्ठंस्तयैव पुरुषत्वमुपेत्य तस्यामास्ते
भवानपरिशुद्ध इवात्मतन्त्रः॥

Daksha said: The one eternally independent entity transcending Maya and surpassing all states of the Buddhi—pure, fearless and of the essence of Consciousness—Thou nonetheless dost manifest Thyself at the same time as a limited being with imperfections. Thou, the eternally free, alone can do this.

सदस्या ऊचुः
उत्पत्त्यध्वन्यशरण उरुकलेशदुर्गेऽन्तकोग्र-
व्यालान्विष्टे विषयमृगतृष्यात्मगेहेरुभारः।
द्वन्द्वश्वभ्रेखलमृगभये शोकदावेऽज्ञसार्थः
पादौकस्ते शरणद कदा याति कामोपसृष्टः॥

The assembled seers said: Look at the predicament of man traversing the paths of Samsara through the forest of Ignorance! O Shelter-giver! The paths are difficult to tread, beset with obstacles and without protection. The fierce serpent of Death is always waiting to spring upon the traveller. The

mirage of sense-objects allures him. The burden of one's body and worldly concerns sits heavily on him. The pitfalls of happiness and sorrow endanger his path. The wild beasts of evil men threaten his safety. And he is ever stricken with the malady of sexuality. How and when can man, caught up in such a predicament, obtain shelter at Thy feet, unless it be by Thy abounding grace?

रुद्र उवाच
तव वरद वराङ्घ्रावाशिषेहाखिलार्थे
ह्यपि मुनिभिरसक्तै-रादरेणार्हणीये।
यदि रचितधियं माविद्यलोकोऽपविद्धं
जपति न गणये तत्त्वत्परानुग्रहेण॥

Rudra said: O Boon-giver! Though devotion to Thy feet can bestow all the desirable objects of worldly life, great sages worship Thee with pure devotion, eschewing all worldly desires. If the ignorant world considers me a mannerless and unclean vagrant, all because of the entire absorption of my mind in Thee, I care not the least for such criticism, strengthened as I am by Thy grace.

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 4.7.26,28,29

Fixing the Mind on God - I

A question that haunts most spiritual aspirants is, 'how to fix the mind on God?' This highly relevant question often takes various other forms, 'How to control the mind?', 'How to conquer lust and other base emotions?', 'How to withdraw the mind from its mad pursuit after the sense-objects?', 'How to gain purity of mind?', 'Is it necessary to have a spiritual teacher?', 'I find meditation distasteful, what am I to do?', etc. The list of questions asked by spiritual aspirants seems to be endless, but the main problem is to control the mind, to draw it back from its gyrations and to direct it to God or our inner spiritual Essence.

Being spiritual aspirants, our aspirations are supposed to be spiritual, not material. Yet we find that our minds run after the treasures of the world. When we sit down to meditate, many worldly thoughts, cares and anxieties continue to assail us. We find ourselves in a very helpless position and seek counsel from various sources. We feel dejected seeing that those who do not have such a spiritual goal are many times happier. When we swim along with nature, it is as easy as going down a hill; and when we try to go against nature, the fight seems to be immense, the struggle intense, and the goal far, far away. Is it that nature is meant to drag us down, to drown us, to engulf us in her iron grip? Or, is it that nature is a hurdle on our path to be crossed over? Or, better still, are nature's obstacles meant to help us gain the strength to cross them?

We have it in the *Śrī Durgā-saptasatī*, or *The Devī-Māhātmyam* as it is familiarly known, how a king, Suratha, having lost his kingdom, and a merchant, Samādhi, having been cast out by his own sons and wife, both met each other in front of the hermitage of

Medhas, the supreme among the twice-born. The king had been thinking:

I do not know whether the capital, well guarded by my ancestors and recently deserted by me, is being guarded righteously or not by my servants of evil conduct.... Those who were my constant followers and received favour, riches and food from me, now certainly pay homage to other kings. The treasure which I gathered with great care will be squandered by those constant spend-thrifts who are addicted to improper expenditures.

The merchant was not far behind in his own thoughts. He thought:

I am a merchant born in a wealthy family. I have been cast out by my sons and wife, who are wicked through greed of wealth. My wife and sons have misappropriated my riches and made me devoid of wealth. Cast out by my trusted kinsmen, I have come to the forest grief-stricken. Dwelling here, I do not know anything regards the welfare or otherwise of my sons, kinsmen and wife. At present is welfare or ill-luck theirs at home? How are they? Are my sons living good or evil lives?

Curiously however, the king found that the concern of the merchant was misplaced and so he asked the merchant, 'why is your mind affectionately attached to those covetous folk who have deprived you of your wealth?' The king too must have reasoned within himself, even as he posed this question, that the kingdom that was keenly on his mind was no longer his and that it did not behove him to feel such a concern for it any longer. But that is the dilemma, neither could shake off the past from his mind and they approached the sage Medhas with a very relevant question. The king asked:

Without the control of my mind, my mind is afflicted with sorrow. Though I have lost the kingdom, I have an attachment to all the paraphernalia of my kingdom. How is this, O best of sages? And this merchant has been disowned by his children, wife and servants, and forsaken by his own kinsmen. Still he is keenly affectionate towards them. Thus both he and I, drawn by attachment towards objects, whose defects we do know, are exceedingly unhappy. How does this happen that though we are aware of it, this delusion comes upon us blinded as we are in respect of discrimination?

The reply which the sage gave is an eye-opener on the extreme power of the *Mahāmāyā*, the Power of God:

Every being has the knowledge of objects perceivable by the senses. An object of sense reaches it *in various ways*. Some beings are blind by day; others there are which are blind by night. Some beings have equal sight both by day and night. Human beings are certainly endowed with the knowledge of the senses but even cattle, birds, animals and other creatures are able to perceive the object of the senses. Eating and sleeping (as also other biological functions) are common to both human beings and animals. Birds, even though they are distressed by hunger, are engaged in dropping food into the beaks of their young ones. Human beings too are attached to their children in expectation of the help they would receive from them. Even so *men and women are hurled into the whirlpool of attachment through the power of the Great Illusion which makes existence of the world possible. It is by her that the world is deluded. She forcibly draws the minds of even the wise and throws them into delusion! She creates this entire universe, both moving and unmoving. It is she who, when propitious, becomes a boon-giver to the human beings for their final liberation. She is the supreme knowledge, is the cause of final liberation, and is eternal. She is also the cause of bondage of transmigration....*

Until this Divine Power is propitiated properly there is no way for humanity to cross over her domain and attain to liberation.

In regard to the creator God, Sri Rama-

krishna observes:

He alone teaches us, who has created this universe; who has made the sun and moon, men and beasts, and all other beings; who has provided means for their sustenance; who has given children parents and endowed them with love to bring them up. The Lord has done so many things—will He not show people the way to worship Him?¹

He says in another place,

The love that you see in parents is God's love; He has given it to them to preserve His creation. The compassion that you see in the kind-hearted is God's compassion; He has given it to them to protect the helpless.²

It is God Himself who does everything. He it is who places in the individual a sense of free will, a sense of responsibility for one's deeds, so that one will try to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong, refrain from wrong deeds and perform good deeds. It is God Himself who places in the hearts of all beings love for their children. It is God Himself who made the mind go out as we read in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. This tendency of the mind to go towards the objects of the senses external to it and, in their absence, to draw upon the impressions left within the mind is God-given. All that we call human weaknesses or the six enemies have been placed within us by God Himself. It is His power, His *Māyā*.

One may wonder then whether it is God's intention that we should be engrossed in the worldly affairs and be subject for ever to transmigratory existence. One may equally wonder whether the purpose of placing obstacles in an obstacle race is for the participants to fall down and injure themselves. What indeed would the obstacle race mean without the obstacles?

1. *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1994), p. 80.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 671

We must not fail to notice in the above observation of Sri Ramakrishna that God Himself teaches men and women the method of worship. He Himself comes down as an incarnation from time to time to show men and women the way to liberate themselves from the shackles He Himself has carefully placed on us. From one side He is cruel for placing us in a maze and asking us to go towards the goal; and on the other, He is the generous guide who leads us towards the goal.

In the *Bhagavad-Gita* Sri Krishna says, 'This Divine Illusion of Mine, constituted of the *gunas*, is indeed hard to surmount; those who take refuge in Me alone, get over this illusion.' It should be noted that Sri Krishna does not say that this Divine Illusion is not surmountable, only it is *hard* to surmount. He further says that this going beyond *Māyā* is possible *only* if one takes refuge in God, who is the Master of His Divine Illusive Power. When one cries out to God for help as a helpless child cries for its mother, then and then alone does God give us refuge even as the mother brings down the vessel from the oven and quickly runs to the child to pick it up in her arms. Until then God allows us to play with nature's bounties even as the mother is content to watch the pranks of the child, being satisfied that the child is happily busy with the toys that have been given to it.

One may wonder how the mind that is given to the sense pursuits will turn to God and take refuge in Him. This mechanism that God has conjured up is indeed unique in that the way out of this is also the way that binds the human soul to it. Speaking about how it is not sufficient merely to abstain from enjoyment of the object of the senses, Sri Krishna says:

From an unfed embodied being sense-objects fall off, but not the *relish* for them. But even this relish of the man of steady wisdom ceases when that supreme Being is realized. *The turbulent senses forcibly lead astray the mind of even the*

struggling wise person.

It is therefore not merely sufficient if one distances oneself from the sense-objects, though that is advisable, for it prevents an external impulse from reaching the mind and disturbing it. What is equally important to note is that the relish for sense-objects that has taken possession of the mind will self-ignite and cause internal disturbances. Living in seclusion, away from disturbing sense-objects, will therefore help to detect these lurking relishes, which must then be tackled. Upon the realization of the supreme Being, even this relish does not remain. Indeed, as Sri Ramakrishna says, one who has developed a taste for syrup made from sugar-candy has no more any hankering for coarse treacle.

Merely distancing oneself from sense-objects is not enough because one may still ruminate over them. The danger in this is shown by Sri Krishna:

For a person *thinking of the sense-objects*, there grows *attachment for them*; from attachment arises *desire*, from desire results *anger*, from anger results *delusion*, from delusion results *confusion of memory*, from confusion of memory results *destruction of intelligence* and from destruction of intelligence he *perishes*.

Through prolonged thinking of the sense-objects, one develops an attachment for them and a strong hankering and thirst to possess these. Any obstacle on the way kindles anger. Sri Ramakrishna aptly warns by saying that anger is a deadly sin which should be avoided. Anger is a sure indication of the desires within. It is a condensed form of desire. Anger results in delusion, the loss of the discriminative faculty in respect of what is to be avoided; indeed, one who is angry no longer behaves like a normal being and may even go to the extent of abusing his teacher. From delusion arises loss of memory relating to the teachings of the scriptures

(Continued on page 189)

Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from December 1997 issue)

यदचिमद्यदणुभ्योऽणु च
यस्मिँल्लोका निहिता लोकिनश्च।
तदेतदक्षरं ब्रह्म स प्राणस्तदु वाङ्मनः
तदेतत्सत्यं तदमृतं तद्वेद्व्यं सोम्य विद्धि॥

Yad-arcimad-yad-aṇubhyo'ṇu ca,
yasmin-lokā nihitā lokinaś-ca;
Tad-etad-akṣaram brahma
sa prāṇas-tad-u, vāṇi-manah,
tad-etat satyam, tad-amṛtam,
tad-veddhavyam, somya, viddhi (II.ii.2)

That which is flaming (bright), subtler than the subtle, and That on which are set all the worlds as well as the inhabitants—That is the imperishable, immutable Brahman. He is the vital force. That, again, is speech and mind. This Entity, that is such, is true (real). That is immortal. That is (a mark) to be penetrated (by the mind), my sober friend, penetrate It.

The teacher carries on the discussion till he comes to the method of realization. He tries to take us inward to That which is of the nature of light, *Saccidānanda svarūpa*. The enlightenment, or attainment of knowledge, is described as luminosity. It (the Reality) is smaller than the smallest and *ca* (and) implies mahat, bigger than the biggest. Small and big are spacial concepts and carry with them the idea of compartmentalization, but Atman or Brahman can neither be compartmentalized in space, being *akṣara* (undecaying) and *avyaya* (partless), nor can it be compartmentalized in time. It is transcendental—non-spatial and non-temporal, i.e., immortal. So It cannot be measured or limited by space and time, i.e., It is *ananta*. The mani-

fest world, *bhū-loka*, and unmanifested worlds, *svarga-loka*, etc.—these seven worlds rest (are fixed) on It. Also the dwellers of the worlds verily rest on That changeless, immutable Being. All the permutations and combinations of the *pañca mahābhūtas* (the five elements of nature) rest on It. We have imagined or superimposed on It the whole world of *nāma-rūpa-vikāra* (names-forms-modifications), but *Puruṣa* alone is true.

Elsewhere, in the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*, it is said that clay (*mṛttikā*) alone is the truth (*satya*) of the many names-forms in the potter's shop. The substratum for which we have been searching so long is called here, *Akṣara* Brahman. But where do my life, mind, speech, faculties of thinking, memory, etc. come from? Vedantins say that these also come from It because these are also superimpositions on the Brahman alone.

Somya, the one being addressed, is the student who is in full control of himself, the master of his senses and mind, being not tossed about by the desires of the worldly objects. He is thus well prepared to start the journey within himself to know the Atman as the ultimate Truth, while all else is false (*mithyā*). *Mithyā* is that which has the appearance of reality or truthfulness only for the time it is so perceived but proved wrong on evaluation, while *satya* (real) is that which is unchangeable. One has to grow from the present state of perceiving the *mithyā* to the state of *turiya* in *nirvikalpa* samadhi. Then only the falsity or unreality of the world-appearance will be comprehended. Then alone, the illusory snake is contradicted by

the reality of the rope (Atman or Brahman). Experience and knowledge of the world is contradicted in samadhi. But this Reality is uncontradicted in all the three orders of time—past, present and future—(*trikāla-abādhlita*); so It is immortal (*amṛta*). The wise (*jñāni puruṣa*) see the world-appearance, but attraction for it ceases as Atman alone is seen as the Reality. The teacher says to the student, O my child, my friend, try to penetrate deep within to know that Reality. That alone is the object of your pursuit, your target, the mark or the bull's eye, into which the arrow (your mind through meditation) should penetrate and lose its identity by being embedded in It. Similarly, the individual identity (*jīva-hood*) should merge and lose itself in the Real Self (Atman or Brahman).

Sri Ramakrishna used to narrate the parable of a doll made of salt trying to measure the depth of the ocean; it dissolves in the waters of the ocean. So, the student is told that Atman alone is the goal of his meditation. He must penetrate that mark with the help of his mind, by concentrating all its energies and faculties and diving deep within himself, and lose himself in the Reality or Atman concealed in the core of his heart. *Tad veddhavyam* is the operative clause. It is not that merely an intellectual knowledge of Atman is to be acquired but that the very substratum of life is to be pierced through (merged into). Next, the teacher will tell the method of 'piercing' the Atman. We are to withdraw the senses and the mind from *māyā* and enter the *guhācara samnihitam* (the mover in the cavity of our heart who is well hidden).

धनुर्गृहीत्वौपनिषदं महास्त्रं
शरं ह्युपासानिशितं संधयीत।
आयम्य तद्भावगतेन चेतसा
लक्ष्यं तदेवाक्षरं सोम्य विद्धि॥

*Dhanur-grhītvā-aupaniṣadam mahāstram
śaram hy-upāsāniṣitam sandhayīta;*

*Āyamyā tad-bhāvagatena cetasā
lakṣyaṁ tad-evākṣaram, somya,
viddhi. (II.ii.3)*

Taking hold of the great weapon of the Upaniṣad as a bow, one should put on it the arrow sharpened by meditation. Drawing the string with a mind absorbed and directed in Its thought, penetrate that very target—That is the imperishable, O my friend.

This and the next *mantra* make clear that man's faculties are enough to pierce the wall of ignorance by taking recourse to the discipline of one-pointedness to reach the goal. The greatest weapon of that time, the bow, is compared to the Upaniṣad. To pierce the mark you sharpen your mind like an arrow through *upāsana*, and discipline the other faculties. The string of the bow is your own effort. You pull it right up to your ears, i.e., apply your maximum effort, and let fly the arrow into the target and become one with the immutable.

By 'Upaniṣads', some say, is meant the essential teaching of the Upaniṣads and not the whole literature. The mind and the other faculties are sharpened by continued and determined effort at meditation. This enhances one's cognition, emotion, will-power and self-control. Yoga is control over the modulations of the mind. These modulations must be stopped by the application of one's energies. No other desire should possess the mind except the desire for *Ātma-jñāna*. Such is the 'arrow' capable of piercing the target; not a blunt or dull mind which will fall down even before reaching the target. The *sādhaka* or archer places this arrow on the bow in a proper manner and draws the bow-strings to the maximum extent to give the greatest momentum to the arrow, aims the arrow at the target or object with such one-pointed attention that there is no room for distraction by any object, and releases the arrow of the mind, which then flies

to the Atman and gets merged into It. Handle this bow and arrow very carefully, cautiously, with utmost confidence, making it certain that there is no chance of missing the mark on account of laxity or slackness or mistake on your part. Pulling the bow-string to give additional power to the arrow is to be conscious or aware of the goal to be attained; this ensures that the purpose of meditation is crystal clear.

For experience or knowledge of worldly objects, the *tripuṭi* procedure of knower, known and knowledge is used. But to know the *Akṣara*, the *Saccidānanda*, the real Self, the process is to sharpen our faculties, cleansing the mind by meditation (*upāsanā-niṣitam śara*). In a way the *tripuṭi* is present here also, though there is no outside object; there is only an inward journey undertaken by some rare stable person (*dhīra puruṣa*). He shuts off all his senses from the pursuit of the objects of the external world desiring instead to have a taste of the bliss of immortal Atman or Brahman. This idea of the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* is being told here in another way. The *lakṣyārtha* is *Akṣara* Brahman and this is the *jñeya* part, the thing to be known. The *jñātā* is the self as yet confined to the awareness of body and all faculties appertaining to it. The link between *jñātā* and *jñeya* is the *jñāna kriyā*, *dhyāna*, concentration. The *kriyā* is, first knowing intellectually that the apparent man is a creature of circumstances and subject to all the ups and downs of life, and then to break this chain or bondage by saturating the mind with the idea that I am not this *jīva*, but the Atman. *Tad-bhāva-gatena* means that you saturate your being with that essence, like saturating water with sugar so that the sweetness of sugar converts the tasteless water into sweet syrup. The apparent man, the *jīva* known by his name, status, etc. is addressed as *Soniyā*. He does not yet know his true original nature and, eager to know it, he is asking *ko'ham, ko'ham*, who am I, who am I? Entertaining no other

thought in the mind is possible because of his gathering all the energies of his being (mind and other faculties) (*āyamyā tad-bhāva-gatena cetasā*) and avoiding the dissipation of energy so that he can perform the exacting task of *Ātma-jñāna-kriyā*. The mind is receptive; so start thinking that I am not a *jīva* subject to *sukha-duḥkha* (joys and sorrows) but the divine Being, Atman, transcending *sukha-duḥkha*. By repeating this suggestion within the mind and by conforming the outer behaviour to this idea that the divine resides within, the mundane ethical code is raised to a higher spiritual level and the self is rebuilt on the solid foundation of the remembrance: *ayam ātmā brahma, aham brahmāsmi*, etc.

In the *Yoga-sūtra* the example is given that a liquid has no shape of its own but it takes the shape of its container. Similarly, the unregenerate mind has no shape of its own but it moves out via the senses and takes the shape of the object when the perceptual effects are presented to it. But, the disciplined mind, the *cetas*, consciousness, takes the shape of the continuous suggestion that I am not this—*deha, prāṇa, manas, vijñāna* or even *ānanda kośas* (body, vital force, mind, intellect, bliss sheaths)—but that I am the supreme, sublime Divine permeating me and the entire world. There is no contradiction: even within this finite form, the mind takes on the form of the Infinite. Man is both the son of man and the son of God. Sri Rama-krishna used to say that a domesticated cat when it goes to the forest becomes a wild cat. This very mind, limited and subjected to so many petty desires today, will reach the level of total cessation of sorrow and the attainment of supreme Bliss (*ātyantika duḥkha nivṛtti, parama sukha prāpti*) by becoming identified with *Akṣara* Atman or Brahman.

(to be continued)

Nature Images in the *Kathamrita* and the Poetic Mind of M.

SWAMI DEVENDRANANDA

The author, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, highlights in this article that some of the incidents in the life of Sri Ramakrishna took place in spring, the king of seasons, and that 'M.', the recorder of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, had the poetic mind to put in print the nectarine words of Sri Ramakrishna delivered in this picturesque setting that Nature afforded on the banks of the sacred river Ganges at Dakshineswar. The combined effect was highly uplifting to the assembled devotees and sincere spiritual aspirants of various denominations.

Hindu mythology has it that whenever mother Earth is unable to bear on Her bosom men and women with excessive sinful tendencies, She prays to Vishnu to relieve Her of the unbearable pain. Graciously the Lord takes His birth in various forms and in each of these incarnations, in a way peculiar to that form which He assumes, He fulfils His mission of removing the wickedness of the wicked and establishes a religious way of life suited to that age. Naturally therefore, mother Earth looks forward eagerly to the advent of an incarnation from time to time, and sensing that happy event seems to decorate her person with a variety of flowers and fruits filling the air with sweet fragrance. That bringing of flowers into bloom occurs every year during spring, the king of seasons. And in the spring of 1836 was born Sri Ramakrishna. Curiously also it was in spring that 'M.' (Sri Mahendranath Gupta), his favourite disciple among the householder devotees, came to meet him for the first time in 1882. It was a fruitful meeting in which the preceptor and the receptor became united in a bond of divine love. The beneficial result of that divine union is the *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* (translated into *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*).

M., the intimate companion of Sri

Ramakrishna, was a lover of nature and a person of imaginative disposition. He had many domestic problems to worry about and even contemplated suicide. It was with a troubled mind that he came one day to Dakshineswar with the idea of paying a casual visit to a place of scenic beauty. But the sublime spiritual atmosphere emanating from the saint of Dakshineswar and Nature's beauty so transformed the mental state of M. that he became a regular visitor to the Master and day after day heard the nectarine words that poured out from his lips in torrents. Says Aldous Huxley in his introduction to *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*,

...To a reverent love for his master, to a deep and experiential knowledge of that master's teaching, he [M.] added a prodigious memory for the small happenings of each day and a happy gift for recording them in an interesting and realistic way. Making good use of his natural gifts and of the circumstances in which he found himself, M. produced a book unique, so far as my knowledge goes, in the literature of hagiography.... Never have the small events of a contemplative's daily life been described with such wealth of intimate detail. Never have the casual and unstudied ut-

terances of a great religious teacher been set down with so minute a fidelity.¹

What needs to be added to this appraisal is that the recording relates to the 'most profound and subtle utterances' about the nature of the ultimate Reality and the ways to realize it given out by the incarnation of the age in a picturesque setting that in its sublimity is very elevating, put down for posterity in a language and by a mind that are highly tuned to a poetic presentation. No translation is a substitute for the original and Indian expressions and concepts do not easily translate into English.

M. describes his first visit to Dakshineswar and presents the magic spell that the beautifully decorated temple premises at Dakshineswar cast upon his dejected mind. He writes in the very preface to the *Kathamrita*:

On the bank of the Ganges, in front of the Panchavati, are a *bel* tree and a sweet-scented tree bearing milk-white *gulchī* flowers. Sri Ramakrishna had great fascination for the trees bearing *mallikā* flowers (a type of jasmine), *mādhavī* (a spring creeper bearing white fragrant flowers) and *gulchī* flowers. He had himself brought the *mādhavī* creeper from Vrindavan and planted it there.... East of the Hanspukur (goose pond) and the Kuthi (mansion) is a pond bordering which are *champaka* (*Michella Champaka*) trees. A little distance away there are trees bearing the *jhurinkā* (pendant hibiscus resembling ear-rings), rose and *kāñcan* (gold) flowers. On the fence bloom the *aparājītā* (a blue [or white] flower used in worship, *Clitoria Ternatea*), with jasmine or *shefālikā* (*Nyctanthes Arbortristis*) flowers nearby. To the

west of the twelve Siva temples there are the oleander of white and red varieties, rose, jasmine and *bel* trees. There is a stray *dhattura* (stramonium flower) used in the worship of Mahādeva. In places there are the *tulsi* plants grown within raised brick structures. To the south of the *Nahabat* are the *bel*, jasmine, *gandharāj* (gardenias) and rose trees. At a little distance from the brick-built wharf, there are *padma-karavī* (lotus oleander) and *kokilākṣa* (cuckoo-eyed) trees. By the side of the room in which Sri Ramakrishna stayed are a few *kṛṣṇacūdā* (*Poinciana Pulcherrima*) trees, and, nearby, a *bel*, jasmine, gardenia, rose, *mallikā*, china rose, white and red oleanders, and again, a five-petalled china rose of the Chinese variety of *javā* (hibiscus).²

In the above description we come across many flower trees—with a rich variety of shapes, colours, and fragrance—, planted in various places with great taste. One has just to imagine the splendour of the flowers to become transported to a divine realm. In such an ideal setting M. met Sri Ramakrishna for the first time, and the impact of this *darshan* M. sets out in the following words:

The room was full of people, drinking in his nectar-like words in deep silence. Sri Ramakrishna was seated on an ordinary bedstead facing the east, and talking of God, his face beaming with a divine smile. The devotees were seated on the floor. M. stood speechless and looked on. It seemed to him that Śukadeva himself were speaking the words of God to all the assembled preceptors. Or it was as if Sri Chaitanya were at the Pūrīkṣetra (Puri) seated with Rāmānanda, Svarūp,

1. Foreword to *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by Aldous Huxley.

2. Cf. *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* (Calcutta: Sri M. Thakurbati, Bengali Era 1384), vol. 1, p. 13. [Hereafter *Kathamrita*.]

and others, and singing the name and glories of God. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'When, uttering the name of Hari or Rama once, you shed tears and your hairs stand on end, then you may know for certain that you do not have to perform such devotions as the sandhyā any more. Then you have a right to renounce rituals; rituals drop away of themselves. Then it will be enough if you repeat only the name of Rama or of Hari, or even simply Om.'³

M. was deeply charmed to hear those words of Sri Ramakrishna. Looking around himself with wonder, he said to himself, 'What a beautiful place! What a charming man! How beautiful are his words! I have no wish to move from this spot.' M. thus found in the midst of the beauties of nature, of many soul-enthraling names, forms and fragrance, Sri Ramakrishna who transported M.'s mind to the realm of the formless. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore,

*In the sea of form have I dipped
In the hope of the formless jewel,
No more shall I roam about
from wharf to wharf
Rowing my miserable boat.*⁴

Yes, time and again M. saw and touched that sea of form. In the pages of the *Kathamrita*, M.'s poetic soul tried to paint the picture of the Master merged in the formless. Describing the birthday ceremony of Sri Ramakrishna in the year 1883, M. writes:

It was Sri Ramakrishna's birthday....
All the intimate devotees wanted to celebrate his birthday. From morning, the devotees streamed in one after another.

There stood the temple of Mother Bhavatarini. After the morning rite of the waving of lighted lamps before the deity, a concert of musical instruments began to play a pleasant tune in the morning *rāga* from the Nahabatkhanā (a sort of music room on a raised platform). It was springtime. The trees, creepers and plants were covered with new leaves and blossoms. Recalling that it was the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna, the hearts of devotees were filled with joy. The very air seemed laden with joy.⁵

The poetic spirit in M. mingled with the divine spirit emanating from Sri Ramakrishna, and becoming absorbed in that enchanting form of Sri Ramakrishna who fell into a trance after a little conversation, described the events:

As the Master uttered these words, standing before the devotees, he suddenly fell into an ecstatic mood. His mind was withdrawn from external objects. No sooner did he say, 'the lotus of the heart burst into blossom', than he went into deep samadhi. He stood motionless, his countenance beaming and his lips parted in a smile. After a long time he returned to the normal consciousness of the world.... Presently some devotees from Konnagar arrived, singing kirtan to the accompaniment of drums and cymbals. As they reached the northeast verandah of Sri Ramakrishna's room, the Master joined in the music, dancing with them intoxicated with divine joy. Now and then he went into samadhi, standing still like a statue. While he was in one of these states of divine unconsciousness, the devotees put thick garland of flowers around his neck.... It was indeed a sight for the gods, to see the Master standing motionless in

3. Cf. *Kathamrita*, vol. 1, p. 15; see also *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985), p. 77 [Hereafter *Gospel*.]

4. Rabindranath Tagore, *Geetabitan*.

5. *Kathamrita*, vol. 2, p. 12; see also *Gospel*, p. 186.

samadhi, with fragrant garlands hanging from his neck, his countenance beaming with love and the devotees singing and dancing around him.

When it was time for his noon meal, Sri Ramakrishna put on a new yellow cloth and sat on the small couch. His golden complexion, blending with his yellow cloth, enchanted the eyes of the devotees.⁶

M. had seen the Master in a divine trance even before. In fact, his first vision of the Master in a trance as recorded in the *Kathamrita*, occurred on 5 March 1882. This has been identified as his 'third meeting'. Narendranath, Vivekananda of later days, was present that day. The Master was in samadhi. Sri Ramakrishna's soul was itself the meditator and the object of meditation, for, in the soul is both love (*prema*) and satisfaction (*rati*), i.e., Absolute Bliss. In the scriptures this state is called '*Akhandā Satchidananda Darshan*' (the uninterrupted perception of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss), or '*Brahmopalabdhi*' (realizing Brahman). As a result of this Sri Ramakrishna became in-drawn. In that state, at times his respiration and his pulse beat stopped. In the scriptures this is called Nirvikalpa Samadhi, i.e., complete identification with the Infinite in a state of trance, a state higher than Savikalpa Samadhi or Chetana Samadhi, the state of trance when the mind takes on one particular modification. M. describes his first picture of Sri Ramakrishna in trance in these words:

Sri Ramakrishna was standing still, surrounded by a few devotees, and Narendranath was singing. M. had never heard anyone except the Master sing so sweetly. When he looked at Sri Ramakrishna he was struck with wonder; for

the Master stood motionless, with eyes transfixed. He seemed not even to breathe. A devotee told M. that the Master was in samadhi. M. had never before seen or heard of such a thing. Silent with wonder, he thought: 'Is it possible for a man to be so oblivious of the outer world in the consciousness of God? How deep his faith and devotion must be to bring about such a state!'⁷

M. recalls another evening in spring when he was in the presence of Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. The occasion left a deep impression on M.'s mind, for nature appeared to him very calm and sublime, especially in the evening. He paints the following picture in his exceptionally poetic language:

It was evening. Sri Ramakrishna went out to look at the sacred river. The lamp had been lighted in the room. Sri Ramakrishna chanted the hallowed name of the Divine Mother and meditated on Her. The evening worship began in the various temples.... It was high-tide and the Ganges was flowing northwards with a murmuring sound. The sound of the gongs, floating on the air, mingled with the murmuring voice of the river making it all the more sweet to the ear. In such a setting Sri Ramakrishna was seated. All is sweetness. The hearts overflowed with sweetness. Sweetness! Sweetness! Sweetness within and without!⁸

To M. everything at Dakshineswar was exuding sweetness. The sky above, the Ganges, the plants, the trees, the flower garden covered with fragrant flowers, everything gave M. as it were a very warm welcome. It seemed to the poetic mind of M. that

6. *Gospel*, pp. 189–90; see also *Kathamrita*, vol. 2, pp. 16–17.

7. *Gospel*, p. 89.

8. *Gospel*, p. 180; see also *Kathamrita*, vol. 4, p. 9.

throughout the day and night Nature changed her form and colour every moment presenting to the receptive mind varied aspects of her sweetness.

An artist paints a number of background scenes for a theatrical performance. But these pictures are still paintings. However, here Nature was lively and the focus of attention was on the play of the Divine Mother in the person of Sri Ramakrishna in a variety of soul-enthraling moods—sometimes like a child, sometimes dancing or singing or motionless in samadhi as one would see in a picture or a statue, sometimes giving profound interpretations of scriptural truths, at other times in the company of devotees, sometimes showering his blessings and at other times looking upon himself as the humblest of devotees of the Mother. It was a cloudy day. M. was standing near the Panchavati and beheld an excellent scene. Overwhelmed with emotion, M. pictured the scene:

...the Master was coming towards them [M. and Latu from the direction of the pine-trees]. Behind him the sky was black with the rain-cloud. Its reflection in the Ganges made the water darker. The disciples felt the Master was God Incarnate, a Divine Child five years old, radiant with the smile of innocence and purity. Around him were the sacred trees of the Panchavati under which he had practised spiritual discipline and had beheld visions of God. At his feet flowed the sacred river Ganges, the destroyer of man's sins. The presence of this God-man charged the trees, shrubs, flowers, plants and temples with spiritual fervour and divine joy.⁹

Viewing such a scene, the poetic mind of M. was gradually transported from the

visible world to the Truth beyond. It was on the same day, we find M. sitting in the evening at the bathing-ghat, his mind absorbed in the meditation on Sri Ramakrishna. M. describes his train of thought:

The flood-tide had just set in. As he listened to the waters lapping against the bank, many pictures of Sri Ramakrishna's divine life flitted before his mind: the Master's deep samadhi, his constant ecstasy, his joy in the love of God, his untiring discourse on spiritual life, his genuine love for the devotees, and, above all, his childlike simplicity. Who was this man? Was it God who had embodied Himself on earth for the sake of His devotees?¹⁰

Thus, M. a lover of nature with a poetic mind, as it were, took a new birth. Coming into contact with the beauty and sublimity of nature, he used to forget the worries of worldly life. The beauty and grandeur of nature for a while satiated the appetite of his soul. As he came into contact with Sri Ramakrishna, a new dimension of perception opened before him. Though he continued to love nature, he was gripped by the constant mental recollectedness of Sri Ramakrishna. That is why in every depiction of nature and Sri Ramakrishna, there is a soul-elevating message, an outpouring of the love that was Sri Ramakrishna.

In conclusion, the nectarine words flowing out of the lips of Sri Ramakrishna are recorded in the *Kathamrita*. That nectar which sprang from Sri Ramakrishna, the embodiment of love, is his especial gift to mankind. His marked disciple (M.) among his lay devotees, gathered the nectar in the cup of his mind, rejoiced in it time and again even as a cow chews its cud, and shared it with others as well. Although he wanted to

9. Gospel, p. 504.

10. Gospel, p. 507.

keep himself concealed and not allow the ego to raise its head, he could not succeed in suppressing his poetic mind. In the *Kathamrita* he has painted a number of descriptions of natural scenes. This too is a gift from Sri Ramakrishna himself. Sitting by the boundless ocean of Sri Ramakrishna's compassion, M.'s poetic soul became stimulated as can be understood from the soul-captivating expressions found in almost all the chapters of the *Kathamrita*. While reading the gospel of that immortal being, the mind gets automatically elevated creating many oases in the desert of worldly life where people afflicted with sorrow can get peace, shelter and the assurance of safety. One realizes that the afflictions of life can never be soothed by people, money, honour, glory, houses or earthly gifts. Love of God and worshipping

Him in whatever way appeals to one is the only balm for an afflicted mind. Unless one gets rid of one's ego and places the cherished form of God in one's heart, one cannot get rid of one's painful experiences. The *Kathamrita* is truly a nectar comforting the distressed human soul.

It is also a lamp that lights up all the tenets and illumines the ways by which a man can become a believer in God and manifest the presence of the divine within him. For a believer in the formless aspect of God, the *Kathamrita* takes him to the realization of Brahman. Thus *Kathamrita* is poetic in composition, soothing in content, and provides both *bhakti* and *jnana* to the sincere aspirant. □

Fixing the Mind on God-I

(Continued from page 180)

which are the words of God, and the teachings of the preceptors who are the vehicles through whom God communicates. Having lost the memory of teachings which act as guidelines, one does not know what is right and what is wrong and is therefore unable to decide what one should do under the circumstances. This loss of memory leads to the destruction of intelligence, for, indeed one's intelligence is favourable for spiritual progress when it is guided by the words of God and the preceptor. When the intelligence is destroyed there is no saying what such a person will do and how soon he will rush towards destruction. His equipment is no more fit for taking him to the human goal.

This mechanism itself can be used to take man Godward. Meditation on God, on our true nature, and cultivating love for God are positive helps to get attached to God and to desire Him alone. This desire for God, this

longing for God-vision, is not like ordinary desire which takes one via anger, delusion, loss of memory and loss of understanding to destruction. Desire for God leads also to the desire for the company of the devoted, to the desire to visit places of pilgrimage, to the study of scriptures, to the repetition of His holy name, to singing His glory and praises, to prayer, to living in solitude and being lost to the world.

Herein lies the need for making a decision: Whether to think of the objects of the senses and take the downward plunge to sure destruction or to think of God and march on the royal path to God-realization, the goal of human life. The earlier this decision is made in life, the less the effort involved in cleansing the mind of impurities, and the more joyous the travel on the spiritual path.

(to be continued)

In the Battlefield of Dharmakshetra

REV. ANTHONY ELENJIMITTAM

Reverend Elenjmittam is not unknown to the readers of Prabuddha Bharata. In this article he urges humanity to 'accept and utilize all that is good and positive in the world of culture and human civilization, but be ever rooted in the soil of the land of the Ganges and the Himalayas, waging our everyday battles, the Gītā of Sri Krishna serving as the pole star guiding us to reach the shores beyond time and space.'

There is a profound esoteric sense in the fact that Sri Krishna expounded the gospel of Gita in the battlefield of Kurukshetra, right in the middle of two rival armies poised for a fratricidal war. This is symbolic of the undeniable fact that for all those who have the courage to face the challenges of this earthly sojourn in an embodied state, the short interval between the cradle and the grave is nothing but an uninterrupted struggle—a state of choosing between two or more alternatives, ever finding oneself on crossway and at a crossroads. We have to steer straight and win out.

The overwhelming majority of human-kind live like mammals, nay, sink even below to the animal level. Not having discovered the purpose of human birth consequential to their spiritual ignorance which engenders egotism and egotistic selfish interests, they succumb to the animal instincts with the inevitable consequence of being burnt in the flames of lust and lucre. This is the so-called Original Sin in the Semitic religions like Judaism, Islam and Christianity, and *Avidyā* or Spiritual Ignorance in the Indo-Aryan group of religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and their offshoots in the land of Ganges and the Himalayas, in the philosophic schools of Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, Herclitus, in the Neo-Platonic schools of Alexandria and their ramifications in the history of European civilization.

Our embodied life on this earthly planet is a training ground to face the ordeals of life courageously, intrepidly with prowess and valour, and learn the lessons of our temporary stay on earth. The cowards and the thoughtless dwell at the animal level, many falling a victim to the many vices of the so-called 'civilized' humans. Besides, their life is reduced to eating, drinking, begetting children, falling sick, growing old, and dying. Owing to the growing *abuse* of scientific technology and mass media like the television, press and telecommunication media, human family is rolling down the hill into dungeon pits, forgetful of the higher values of life. Man fails to recognize that Divinity is immanent in all beings, and fails to strive to make patent the latent capacity for human beings to bypass our animal heritage and reach the pinnacles of spiritual perfection joyously proclaiming, 'Aham *brahmāsmi*, I am Brahman'. This very life, this very mind, this soul itself is Brahman: *Ayam ātmā brahma*. Man can reach the Everest peak of Self-realization immersing oneself in that unconditioned absolute Consciousness and experience for oneself the glories of Self-realized dynamics and service in society retaining one's identity as Consciousness even in this very life. The very fact that some have realized this supreme Vedantic truth is the clear and convincing proof that we also can reach that goal in life, making our earthly life meaningful and an adventure.

Mammals, men and supermen. This is the hierarchical scale in which human beings find themselves today. By birth we are nothing but mammals; with education and discipline we can become human beings; with Vedantic *Jñāna*, with Platonic *Gnosis*, with purity of heart we can rise higher than human beings and become angels on earth, embodied gods in our thinking, speaking and acting as men of God on earth. Man and God are but the two sides of the same medal. God plus egotism is man, man freed from egotism is God. God perceived with our five senses is this universe; the universe perceived with transcendental insight, seen with the third eye, is God.

Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha, Taoism, Zen Buddhism, Ādi Śaṅkara's *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, the *De ente et essentia* of St. Thomas Aquinas and a few other scriptural and philosophical literature point out to the clear, evident, undeniable fact that only Consciousness, absolute, unsullied and unconditioned is the sole reality in the universe. Everything else is merely a mental projection. Physical universe of gross matter and the mental world of subtle matter are unreal in themselves, but relatively real as the shadow and penumbra of that supreme Reality which is Existence, Being beyond all becoming. The reality of names and forms is to be sought not in the apparent objects themselves with their names and forms, but in that formless Reality which is the support and substratum of the apparent world of becoming. To leave behind our rich spiritual heritage as enshrined in the Upaniṣads, *Bhagavad-Gītā*, *Brahma Sūtras* in *Patañjali-Yoga*, *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*, Mahayana versions of Buddhism and other priceless pearls of Indian civilization will spell ruin to our Indian peninsula and to generations of human and sentient beings that still await their journey back to the bosom of the Eternal through self-control, purification of heart, self-knowledge, and the service of the Divine in human and sub-human beings. This

scope of earthly life was succinctly expressed by Swami Vivekananda in a terse aphorism: *Ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*, man is born on this earth for the liberation of the soul and for the welfare of the world.

The present writer considers himself as a life-long student of the esoteric wisdom enshrined in the great cultural heritage of our single human family. Hence to my fellow-students on this tiny planet—which is our true motherland—I would urge not to be lured away with the glamour and glitter of scientific technology, with the computerized globalization of world economy, but to utilize scientific inventions and technology to dive deeper in that esoteric wisdom and perennial philosophy wherein alone man can live a purposeful life, reach the shoreless ocean of imperturbable inner peace, serenity and true unalloyed joy which is the *Sat-Cit-Ānanda*, that Existence-Consciousness-Bliss which we have to reach enforcing Law and Order within ourselves, with self-abnegation and renunciation of everything that stands in the way. The more one is prepared to obey the behests, that categorical imperative that wells up from the depths of our conscience, the nearer we reach the shores of the ocean of *Sat-cit-ānanda*. This experience alone engenders conviction within us, dispelling all doubts, hesitations and uncertainties. We then become sure of our ground.

In this century we have seen many Arjunas in the battlefield of Dharmakshetra who have held the torchlight of Vedantic India lit bright leaving to us their mandate of living the divine life in our human form. In a letter the present writer received from the late Swami Shivananda of Rishikesh, he wrote: 'The immortal spirit of *Sanātana Dharma* of India will assert itself in every thoughtful and meditative son or daughter of this country, as it happened in your life. Although born in a Christian family and trained for Christian ministry in the Roman

Catholic Church, you have come out of the closed asphyxiating cell in a church and come out in the open battlefield.' Yes, *Ekam sat, viprah bahudhā vadanti*. 'It is good to be born in a church, but not to die in it', said Swami Vivekananda.

Sri Aurobindo's half a century of silence was creative silence which brought his dream of Life Divine to millions in India and overseas. An earnest appeal to my fellow-students in every part of this Mother India I must make so that with silent brooding and meditative vision we could learn the message of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which we have to live out today in our everyday life. Do not follow nor pine for sensual pleasures which are poison in disguise. Where sensuality ends, there begins spirituality. As Shakespeare said, 'Lust and love are deadly enemies'. Learn self-restraint, hold sensual appetites and sexual desires under control because we have all come on this planet only to regain our true identity with the Self of the universe. The grosser the forms, the more unreal they are. Do not accept nor embrace the gross physical world of men and women, wives and husbands, births and deaths, channies and towns as real and final. Such an illusion will only spell disaster. The subtler a thing the more real it is. The electro-magnetic waves, invisible to our eyes and inaudible to our ears are more real than the images and sounds they bring to you on

the TV screen. When we are prepared to learn truth experientially—and not on hearsay notions or based on the authority of men, gods or prophets—then revelations come to us, the light of the Self shining upon our intellect and revealing truths hidden to our senses and sensory mind.

Our earthly journey has a deep meaning. We are gods on earth disguised as human beings with the self-same omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence of the Eternal Reality which we call Atman in India. Jesus taught us to call this Reality, 'Our Father in Heaven'. In Tantra it is called 'The Divine Mother'. The universal catholic mind of Sri Ramakrishna of Dakshineswar could swing from a personal God to the impersonal Absolute with great ease, simplicity and spontaneity. This India was trod by great sages and saints, rishis and seers. Let us not sell this Mother India to American dollar imperialism or to the glamorous technology of Europe. The Japanese took and perfected western scientific technology but retained their Japanese soul untainted. Let us also accept and utilize all that is good and positive in the world of culture and human civilization, but be ever rooted in the soil of the land of the Ganges and the Himalayas, waging our everyday battles, the *Gītā* of Sri Krishna serving as the pole star guiding us to reach the shores beyond time and space. □

The best form of *japa* is to repeat the Lord's name mentally. 'To repeat the name of the Lord over the rosary is good; repetition of the name on the fingers is better, but mental repetition of the name is the very best.' Mental repetition of the name is indeed the very best. When one repeats the name over the rosary or on the fingers one keeps track of the number of times to a certain extent and cannot give undivided attention to the *japa*. It stands in the way of concentration. Repeat the Lord's name with great concentration. What does it matter if you cannot keep track of the number of times?...If one has devotion for Him, nothing else is necessary.

—Swami Shivananda, *For Seekers of God*, p. 88.

Swami Vivekananda—The Orator

DR. CHHOTE LAL KHATRI

In this well-written article, Dr. Chhote Lal Khatri of Jahanabad in Bihar who worked for his Ph.D. on the thesis 'Swami Vivekananda—An Appraisal (A Critique of his Speeches and Writings)', brings out the many aspects of the Swami's oratorical skill as revealed in his speeches before the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Says the author, 'consciously or unconsciously Swamiji follows many of the guiding principles of oratory laid down by classical masters like Cicero, Aristotle and Quintilian,' and goes on to establish his conviction with examples. He also brings out the different forms of oratory that one finds in Swamiji's speeches.

Swami Vivekananda was *vir bonus dicendi peritus* (virtuous man skilled in speaking), to use Cato's definition of an orator. His literature includes for the most part a recorded collection of his orations that he delivered throughout his long sojourn in the West for most of the nine years of his life. It is regrettable that there was no one to record many of his speeches.

From the literary point of view, Swamiji was an orator first and then a writer. The power of his oratory was well and widely acknowledged by the American and English press. The way he taught the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta in the West in an alien tongue with all force and vitality, yet in simple artistic language, goes a long way to establish him as a master of *ars predicatorum* (the art of preaching). He was the first preacher of Advaita Vedanta to preach in the West, and the impact he made will never be forgotten. For America and Europe he opened the treasure trove of Indian spiritual wisdom, and for India he was a harbinger of a new age of cultural and religious revival.

Swami Vivekananda's speeches and poems are Homeric in the sense that he spoke with divine inspiration. Swamiji, however, does not begin his works, except for some poems, with an invocation to the

muse as Homer did in his epics. Yet time and again he admits the divine force behind him. His speeches were extempore and so persuasive that the noted newspaper *Critic* of New York called him 'an orator by divine right.' Even Plato affirms in his *Dialogues* the divine inspiration of a true poet. The same is applicable to the orator. A natural genius is the prerequisite for an orator, as insisted on by Cicero in his *De Oratore* and *Orator*. It is an inborn quality that cannot be taught; however, training and practice (*exercitatio*) and study (*studium*) manifest this quality. Erasmus once said about St. Bernard that he was 'a preacher by nature rather than by art.' The same can be said about Swamiji.

Consciously or unconsciously Swamiji follows many of the guiding principles of oratory laid down by classical masters like Cicero, Aristotle and Quintilian. Ancient rhetoric was constituted of five parts: Invention, Disposition, Elocution, Memory and Delivery. In one form or another all these were remarkable in Vivekananda's speeches. He was ingenious in inventing arguments, skilled in arranging his ideas in order leading them to a logical conclusion, and unique was his memory when he spoke without any note of preparation. For delivery and elocution he was widely praised. Another newspaper of the U.S., the *Appeal*

Avalanche of Memphis (17 January 1894) reports:

He advances his ideas with as much deliberation as a professor of mathematics demonstrates an example in algebra to his students. Kananda (*sic*) speaks with perfect faith in his own powers and ability to hold successfully his position against all argument. He advances no ideas, nor makes assertions that he does not follow up to a logical conclusion.

Swamiji, in his very first address at the Parliament of Religions, accomplished the first task of a good orator assigned by Cicero, 'not only to make the audience understand, but render them impossible not to understand.' The audience responded to his greeting 'Sisters and Brothers of America' with such aplomb as if they were prepared for it. It recaptures the essence of William Thackeray's address, 'O brothers,...O brothers! Speaking the same dear mother tongue.' The secret of such reception was partly Vivekananda's unconventionality of address, his surging love for all humanity, and intense feeling. The deep passion that was imbedded in his words was well communicated, making them sensational like those of John Donne. Above all, it is the personality of the man that leaves the deepest impression on our mind. As Swamiji says, 'It is the real man, the personality of the man that runs through us.' He stands identical with Aristotle, who maintains that an orator in the course of oration establishes an ethos, a personal character, which itself functions as a means of persuasion.

Appeal to emotion and sentiment to strike popular fancy has always been an effective device at the hands of orators. Such speeches are called panegyric oratory. To quote a few such passages from Vivekananda's addresses at the Parliament:

It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world,....

Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name — heirs of immortal bliss — yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye divinities on earth, sinners! It is a sin to call a man so.

Swamiji's emphatic rap in the speech, 'Ye divinities on earth, sinners!' shook the fundamental notion of the Christian that men are in a state of original sin after the fall. The speaker displays his mastery of rhetorical style by giving pauses, repeating the image of 'immortal bliss' frequently and using other images like 'divinities', 'soul', 'lion', 'spirit' to reinforce the same idea. And by the artistic arrangement of words fully charged with evocative spirit and exclamations, he succeeded in infusing into the souls of his listeners the plea for sovereign and sublime virtue. It is the spirit of 'Assimilation and not Destruction', 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension' that runs through his speeches at the Parliament.

Swamiji was also highly conscious of the theory of decorum. At the Parliament his style was simple and eulogistic throughout. Even when he criticized the West, he kept his tone mild.

But a blow has been struck at her heart by this awful godless West when she sends hypocrisy and atheism into her midst. Instead of sending bushels of abuses, cartloads of vituperation and shiploads of condemnations, let an endless stream of love go forth.

Nowhere else was Vivekananda so formal and conscious of the mind of the audience. Elsewhere, in most cases, he spoke what he had to say—be it appealing or bit-

ing to the audience. In India his speeches were largely informal and at several times his tone grew bitter. His contribution at the Parliament was an example of forensic oratory in the sense that he was pleading before a jury of all creeds and sects the case of Hinduism and of India in a logical and argumentative way, rendering facts of their universality and also pointing out the malady of Christian missionary work in India. And he won the case by getting his criticism endorsed by the Parliament. If the impression of the audience is any test of successful oratory, Vivekananda proved himself beyond doubt a successful orator. Miss Harriet Monroe writes in her autobiography, *A Poet's Life*, that it was 'a rare and perfect moment of supreme emotion. It was human eloquence at its highest pitch.'

Swamiji, like any other preacher, drove home his subtle and scholarly arguments through parables, exemplums and by the use of homely idioms and images. The source of such fables and parables was mainly his guru, Sri Ramakrishna. Speaking in down-to-earth language they served to simplify the abstruse concepts of Advaita philosophy. They are, therefore, functional and not decorative. Besides these, Swamiji's favourite rhetorical devices are repetition of words, ideas and quotations, allusions and references to scriptures, bringing up questions and answering them, and using illustrations, simple and hypothetical remarks, and images and figures of speech. He adroitly used Sanskrit words, mantras, pauses and other linguistic and stylistic devices. See how he illustrates the abstruse concept of Maya through practical examples:

Then there is the tremendous fact of death.... Saints die and sinners die. Kings die and beggars die. They are all going to death, and yet this tremendous clinging on to life exists. Somehow, we do not

know why, we cling to life; we cannot give it up. And this is Maya.

Syntactical parallelism combined with phonological stress and pitch elements achieve a subtle rhythmic effect in the passage.

His lectures from Colombo to Almora can be grouped into deliberative oratory, for he is putting forth his further plan of action, his mission as well as the dual role that India has to play—one as the teacher of spirituality and the other as the student of science and technology. He exhorted his countrymen to wake up from their long stupor and know that they are lions and not sheep. He highlighted India's superiority in the field of religion and spirituality.

There is an eternal fountain of spirituality in our scriptures, and nowhere on earth, except in this land of renunciation do we find such noble examples of practical spirituality.

His speeches here are largely run with this kind of ovation and adulation for Hinduism, reminding his countrymen repeatedly that religion is their backbone, as, perhaps, politics and social reform are the backbone of England and America respectively. But he was not blind to the follies of the West or of India. He criticized both in the same vein:

The West is groaning under the tyranny of Shylocks, and the East is groaning under the tyranny of the priests; each must keep the other in check.

From the rhetorical point of view, Swamiji's lecture, 'My Plan of Campaign', is perhaps the most moving, powerful and personal in content. He narrated, here, some of his experiences in America which were bitter. He came down heavily on the Theoso-

(Continued on page 221)

Karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe

SHAMBHULING

The way of action is indeed mysterious, says Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, and distinguishes between action, inaction and non-action. In this article, Sri Shambhuling of Karnataka discusses sloka 47 in Chapter 2 of the Bhagavad Gita and points out that the Lord does not aim at preaching the way of inaction. He says, 'Body and the sense organs, the products of prakṛti, are the causes of action.... Pleasure and pain are the fruits of action, and, but for the proximity of the puruṣa, the conscious principle, the dual experience is impossible. Hence, puruṣa can be designated prakāśakahetu, the illuminating cause.... puruṣa as the fruit-illuminating cause is negated but not as the conscious principle.' The author concludes by saying that, 'the emphasis is, therefore, on avoiding evil deeds and performing good deeds as an act of worship of the all-pervading divinity, without clinging to the fruits, so that the ultimate Truth underlying all existence reveals itself in the pure mind.'

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥

Karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe
mā phaleṣu kadācana;
Mā karmaphalāheturbhūr-
mā te saṅgo'stvakarmaṇi. (2.47)

Seek to perform your duty; but lay not claim to its fruits. Be not the cause of the fruit; neither shall you lean towards inaction.

This sloka summarizes the whole doctrine of action in a simple, direct, emphatic and delightful way. There are four succinct parts in it, each pregnant with profound ideas.

(1) कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते, *Karmaṇyevādhikāraṣṭe*, 'Your right is to perform your duty':

Where the sense of doership (*kartrtva*) is pronounced, there the idea of duty is possible. Birds and animals do not have this prerogative. They act from instinct. Gods enjoy in heaven the merit of previously performed good actions. The sinners suffer in hell. On earth alone and by man alone can

action be performed yielding fruits. The Lord with emphasis (*eva*) tells Arjuna, the immediate recipient of His message and through him to all the aspirants of the world at large, to avail of this rare opportunity. 'Performing, verily, work alone in this world should one wish to live a hundred years' is the proclamation of *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad*. It amounts to saying that having been born human there is no way to avoid work. What is required is to develop skill in performing actions.

(2) मा फलेषु कदाचन, *mā phaleṣu kadācana*, 'Lay not claim to its fruits':

'Phaleṣu' is used in plural number. How many types of fruits of actions are enumerated herein? is very pertinent. Detailing the types of fruits of actions, Sri Krishna says,

अनिष्टमिष्टं मिश्रं च त्रिविधं कर्मणः फलम्।

Aniṣṭamiṣṭam miśraṁ ca
trividhaṁ karmaṇaḥ phalam

—(line 1, sloka 18.12)

Unpleasant, pleasant and mixed are the threefold fruits of action.

The way to go beyond the threefold fruits of action are mentioned by Sri Krishna and He concludes by saying:

शुभाशुभफलैरेवं मोक्ष्यसे कर्मबन्धनैः।

Śubhāśubhaphalalāirevaṇi

mokṣyase karmabandhanaiḥ

—(line 1, 9.28)

Thus shall you be free from the bondage of actions yielding auspicious and inauspicious results.

The words 'śubha' and 'iṣṭam' are synonymous; 'aśubha' and 'aniṣṭam' connote the same. What is auspicious is pleasant and desirable. What is inauspicious is unpleasant and rejected.

The fruits of action rejected by Arjuna fall under one or the other of these three kinds.

(a) नरके नियतं वासः, *Narake niyatam vāsaḥ* (first half of line 2, sloka 1.44), hell is the long lasting abode. This is an unpleasant or inauspicious fruit of wrong actions.

(b) सुराणामपि चाधिपत्यम्, *Surāṇāmapi cādhipatyam* (last line of sloka 2.8), sovereignty even over the celestials. This is a good or auspicious result of good actions.

(c) भूमावसपत्नमृद्धं राज्यम्, *Bhūmāvāsa-patnamṛddham rājyam* (last line of sloka 2.8), unrivalled and prosperous monarchy on earth. The fruit suggested herein is a mixed one, for, earthly existence is wrought with dualities such as pain and pleasure. The epithets, unrivalled and prosperous, are made use of to render the mixed fruit appear to be free from its unpleasant part and hence auspicious

and desirable.

Thus those who go through the Gita with an eye for finding out the types of fruits produced by action, are led to the conclusion that there are three kinds in it. Further, *ubhe sukṛtaduṣkṛte* in sloka 2.50 means 'both good and evil deeds'. It needs no elaboration that the good and evil deeds yield pleasant and unpleasant results respectively. Hence it is inevitable to reckon the fruits of both pleasant and unpleasant kinds within the scope of the meaning of the term *phaleṣu*. This rejection of the fruits of actions—pleasant, unpleasant or mixed—is brought about through wisdom.

(3) मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूः, *karmaphalāheturbhūḥ*, 'Be not the cause of the fruit of action':

Deep discernment is required to distinguish between the cause of action and that of fruit. The former, the cause of action, consists of five factors. The body, the agent, the various senses, different functions of various sorts and the presiding deity (18.13-15). These five factors constitute the cause of action. To be brief, all actions are done by *Prakṛti* alone (13.29).

Coming to the fruits of actions performed under the three *guṇas* of *Prakṛti*, Sri Krishna says:

कर्मणः सुकृतस्याहुः सात्त्विकं निर्मलं फलम्।
रजसस्तु फलं दुःखमज्ञानं तमसः फलम्॥

Karmaṇaḥ sukṛtasyāhuḥ

sāttvikam nirmalam phalam;

Rajasastu phalam duḥkham-

ajñānam tamasaḥ phalam. (14.16)

The (wise persons) say that the fruit of good (sāttvika) action is pure, the fruit of mobility (rajas) is pain (sorrow), the fruit of inertia (tamas) is ignorance.

Here it is distinctly clear that action itself gets transformed into three types of fruits depending on the *guṇa*. Hence, action itself may be designated as *phalotpādaka hetu*, the fruit-producing cause. Summarizing, the five factors enumerated above (or *Prakṛti*) are the cause of action, and action is the cause of the three types of fruits.

कार्यकरणकर्तृत्वे हेतुः प्रकृतिरुच्यते।
पुरुषः सुखदुःखानां भोक्तृत्वे हेतुरुच्यते॥

*Kāryakaraṇakartṛtve
hetuḥ prakṛtirucyate;
Puruṣaḥ sukhaduhkhānām
bhoktṛtve heturucyate. (13.20)*

In the production of the body and the senses, prakṛti is said to be the cause; in the experience of pleasure and pain, puruṣa is said to be the cause.

In the entire Gita this is the only place in which the cause of the action and the cause of the fruit are discussed together and lucidly bifurcated. Body and the sense organs, the products of *prakṛti* are the causes of action. Pleasure and pain are the fruits of action, and, but for the proximity of the *puruṣa*, the conscious principle, the dual experience is impossible. Hence, *puruṣa* can be designated *prakāśakahetu*, the illuminating cause. It is to be meticulously noted that *puruṣa* is indeed the cause, being the illuminator, of all the three kinds of fruits.

It is evident that action is fruit-producing cause and *puruṣa* is fruit-illuminating cause. From which of these two is man dissuaded by the Lord's statement?—'Do not be the cause of the fruit'. Action ought not to be negated. For, it would be contrary to the teaching, 'Neither shall you lean towards inaction'. Therefore, *puruṣa* as the fruit-illuminating cause is negated but not as the conscious principle. By its essential nature *puruṣa* is beyond causation. Then how did it

become the illuminating cause of both pleasure and pain? For the solution, Sri Krishna says:

पुरुषः प्रकृतिस्थो हि भुङ्क्ते प्रकृतिजान् गुणान्॥

*Puruṣaḥ prakṛtistho hi
bhun̄kte prakṛtijān guṇān.
—(line 1, sloka 13.21)*

Puruṣa seated in Prakṛti, experiences guṇas born of Prakṛti.

Even as this sloka points out how *puruṣa* experiences the *guṇas*, it also is a pointer to how *puruṣa* can secede from causation. The assurance comes from:

य एवं वेत्ति पुरुषं प्रकृतिं च गुणैः सह।
सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि न स भूयोऽभिजायते॥

*Ya evaṁ vetti puruṣam
prakṛtiṁ ca guṇaiḥ saha;
Sarvathā vartamāno'pi
na sa bhūyo'bhijāyate. (13.23)*

He who thus knows the puruṣa and prakṛti together with the guṇas is never born again in whatever way he may live.

It is pointed out that wisdom regarding the *puruṣa* is precisely the antidote to one's becoming the fruit-illuminating cause of the three kinds of fruits. This wisdom puts an end to the cycle of birth and death. The problem of suffering fruits does not arise at all; indeed, one remains poised in the Self. One who does not attain to this wisdom is verily a 'wretch'. This meaningful word occurs in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (3.8.10). एतदक्षरं गार्ग्यविदित्वास्माल्लोकात्प्रैति स कृपणः 'etad-akṣaram Gārgyaviditvāsmāllokātpraitī sa kṛpaṇaḥ', meaning—he who departs from this world without realizing the Immutable Self is a niggard. The Gita highlights this great nugget of Upanishadic lore when Sri Krishna proclaims *kṛpaṇāḥ phalāhetavaḥ* (2nd

line, sloka 2.49). Its implied meaning is that one who, being seated in *prakṛti* illumines the fruits of actions is leading a wretched life.

Must desire for fruits necessarily pre-exist to prompt one to actions? Can one not perform motiveless actions? Such questions arise. Sri Krishna says:

अफलप्रेप्सुना कर्म यत् तत् सात्त्विकमुच्यते।

*Aphalaprepsunā karma
yat tat sātṭvikamucyate (18.23)*

When action is done without being desirous of fruit, that action is declared to be sātṭvika.

Sātṭvika action, even though it is devoid of the performer's desire for fruit, is not bereft of fruit. According to sloka 14.16, 'The fruit of *sātṭvika* action is pure'. This verdict lends credence to the conclusion that desire is neither the fruit-producing cause (which really is *Prakṛti*) nor the fruit-illuminating cause (which is *Puruṣa*). By its presence, desire functions merely as a centrifugal force drawing the mind and the senses outward seeking the produced fruit; by its absence, on offering the fruit as a worship of the Lord in the beings who are served, it acts as a centripetal force, revealing the all-pervading Brahman. Further, this point can be substantiated by the following declaration [See *Jīvanmukti Viveka* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1996), p. 145]:

पुण्यस्य फलमिच्छन्ति पुण्यं नेच्छन्ति मानवाः।
न पापफलमिच्छन्ति पापं कुर्वन्ति यत्नतः॥

*Puṇyasya phalamicchanti
puṇyam necchanti mānavāḥ;
Na pāpaphalamicchanti
pāpam kurvantī yatnataḥ*

Men desire the fruit of good action but not the (performance of) good action itself. They desire not the fruit of evil deeds but they commit it with all care.

Here it can be seen that mere desire for the fruit of good actions, unless it is coupled with good action, is incapable of producing result. Good actions performed without seeking the fruits thereof, i.e., performed in a spirit of worship, is edifying; actions performed with an eye to the fruits of good deeds, still results in pain if the action is evil. Evil deeds, on the other hand, even though divorced from desire, would not fail to produce the fruit.

(4) मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि, *Mā te saṅgo-
'stvakarmaṇi*, Lean not towards inaction.

Fame and honour attend on a person who leads a good life on earth. Conversely, ill fame and dishonour come and choke the evil doer. Omission of doing the right deed is more potent for evil than the commission of a bad act. Self-annihilation is the wage of sin. (2.33)

The emphasis is, therefore, on avoiding evil deeds and performing good deeds as an act of worship of the all-pervading divinity, without clinging to the fruits, so that the ultimate Truth underlying all existence reveals itself in the pure mind. □

All this universe which through ignorance appears as of diverse forms, is nothing else but Brahman which is absolutely free from all the limitations of human thought. A jar, though a modification of clay, is not different from it; everywhere the jar is essentially the same as the clay. Why then call it a jar? It is fictitious, a fancied name merely.

—*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, śloka 227–8.

Some Immortal Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna

S.K. DAS SHARMA

A Clean Mind Mirrors God

As in the mirror, by dirt and filth mired,
one can't see one's face,
So doth God to one in unclean mind
ne'er leave any trace.
Rub the mirror clean, take a view of the self clear;
So in the mind, made pure and clean
by love and sacrifice,
The God Beloved and Merciful e'er doth descend.

Efficacy of God's Name

Birds in trees by clapping of hands get scared
And soon the tree of them is cleared.
So, knowest thou: Away go the sins by singing aloud
The Name of Hari with rhythmic clapping hours round.

Yearning

Restlessness—stormy and fidgety—, and pangs severe
As one does feel when gone down deep in water,
The same feeling in one if emerges from within
For God Benign, doth He reveal unto Him.

* The author, of Calcutta, has brought out a booklet in Bengali, *Anrita Kathamala*, published by Bidhannagar Ramakrishna Vivekananda Kendra. The booklet consists of some verses depicting the immortal sayings of Sri Ramakrishna. Some of the poems translated into English by the author himself are presented here.

How I Came to Sri Ramakrishna

SWAMI PAVANANANDA

This is an interesting reminiscence by Swami Pavanananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, describing his coming to the Ramakrishna Order. We find herein glimpses of the Ramakrishna Math when Swami Shivananda was the President.

While at Rangoon, one day I noticed one or two swamis who were looking up at the building where I was staying then. After some days, I saw a notice board put up on the building, just above the footpath. It was carrying the information that a library of the Ramakrishna Mission had been installed in the hall that was just below the upper storey I was staying in. I often walked up and down the staircase leading to my room. And one evening I thought of looking into that library. The librarian welcomed me as soon as I entered the library. He received me very cordially and that very evening made me a member of the library. We became quite friendly after that. I learnt from him that he was a disciple of the Holy Mother and he used to tell me some incidents of his life and of his association with the Holy Mother. But then I had no knowledge of who the Holy Mother was and what he was telling about her and his own experiences.

On another occasion, while I was walking down towards the place where I was working, I saw a group of young men on the roadside. As I was passing them, someone, who was known to me but whom I could not recognize clearly at that time, suddenly stretched out his hand and handed me a booklet. When I came to my room, I immediately began to read it. It was a book on Yoga philosophy about which I never had read before and had no knowledge of. I was very much charmed on reading that book. It was a book written and published in America, and the author had described very beau-

tifully different aspects of Yoga philosophy. After reading the book, I felt strongly that this was the path for me to follow. The said librarian encouraged me very much when I spoke to him about Yoga and it was he who encouraged me very much to visit Belur Math, where I might be enlightened in this regard and be shown the way how I should proceed on this path. My going to Calcutta was settled and I was helped a lot by those swamis in Rangoon, who desired me to visit Belur Math.

In Calcutta I got a friend, Nirmal Dhar, a disciple of Mahapurush Maharaj. We came to know each other at the Advaita Ashrama, then in Mukhtaram Babu Street. Nirmal Dhar took a great deal of interest in me and I was able to confide in him much of what I was really in search of and I feel grateful for all he did for me. We met everyday and he helped me in informing and guiding me in many matters I was then ignorant about. He took me to Master Mahashay and it was probably again he who guided me to Mahapurushji.

One evening Nirmal Dhar and Swami Siddhatmananda took me to M.'s residence, then on Amherst Street. We climbed the long flight of stairs to the large terrace. The moon was only a few days old and a light was hanging high up in front on the side of the terrace. M. was in meditation at that time at the far end of the terrace to the left of where we sat. A number of pot plants hid him from our view.

We sat silently in the cool evening for a while and then we saw M. approaching us slowly. He stood before us, and we stood up, and he looked at me with his large beautiful eyes, his flowing white beard matching his white dress. He quoted a saying of Jesus from the Holy Bible: 'Before Abraham was I am.' And again, 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.' We sat down and he wished to hear something from me but I did not feel like speaking just then. There was a little talk among those present for a while as we partook of the prasad offered to us and then we left. This was my first meeting with M. and my first meeting with a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

Then came that day when I met Mahapurush Maharaj for the first time in the autumn of 1930. Calcutta is perhaps at its best during this season. It was about 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon. It was again Nirmal Dhar who accompanied me to Belur Math. On arriving at the monastery grounds my companion left me for a short while. When he returned he told me that I could go straight up and meet Mahapurushji who was sitting in the balcony overlooking the Ganga. He said there would be no difficulty in going alone and meeting the Swami.

I entered the brick-paved courtyard of the monastery building. It was a beautiful, quiet afternoon. The golden sunshine was falling through the window on the red staircase as I went up to meet Mahapurushji, the abbot of Belur Math and a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. I had little or no knowledge of Hinduism except from what I had read. I was entering a strange, new world. I was then twenty-one. What sort of reception would I get? I was greatly in need of spiritual help, of someone who had the insight and understanding to help me adjust myself in a world that had suddenly become for me

almost impossible to live in. Some unseen power seemed to be leading me step by step in my dark gropings, by strange ways, to my destined goal.

I climbed the stairs and passed through the small passage leading to the balcony overlooking the Ganga. Without a word of introduction I went before Mahapurush Maharaj, who was reclining on a large easy chair, and bowed to him. Four swamis in bright ochre robes stood behind his chair. My sudden appearance must have surprised the swamis, I suppose. But the way I greeted Mahapurushji—by bowing down in Indian fashion—amused all, even Mahapurushji, and there was a short burst of laughter.

Mahapurushji was speaking a few words to me, when one of the swamis made a sign to me not to continue longer. I was visibly disappointed at so short a meeting. As I was passing by his chair towards the passage, Mahapurushji turned his head in my direction and asked humorously, 'Have you seen?' and he completed the question with a movement of his hand up under his chin. One of the swamis said, 'Master Mahashay!' and we all laughed at the way he alluded to M. who kept a long beard. This, I came to learn, was a very characteristic way with Mahapurushji in expressing himself.

I had recently met Master Mahashay in Calcutta and I cannot say if he [Mahapurushji] understood that it was my contact with M. that led me to Belur Math. I left his presence with quite a pleasant feeling. But everything was in a nebulous state. This fortunately was not to continue for long.

My next meeting with M. was a few days later. It was in the afternoon and Nirmal Dhar accompanied me to the staircase. He remained below and I went alone. Half-way up the staircase I was told to enter his

room on the left. M. was lying at the far end of the room. He was unwell. He asked me to sit on the chair by his bedside. I sat silently for a short while. M. enquired whether I had been initiated. I did not understand what he meant and so he asked again if I had received a mantra. I told him I hadn't. He kept quiet and spoke no more of the subject. When I took leave I found that Nirmal Dhar was still waiting at the foot of the stairs. When I mentioned that M. had enquired if I had been initiated, he at once told me that it was a hint to get initiated. So the next few days I spent gathering as much information I could regarding it.

We caught the ferry one evening at the ghat below the Howrah Bridge for Belur, intending to speak to some of the senior monks about my initiation. When I reached I got into conversation with one of the monks who I came to know later was Swami Saswatananda. We sat talking on the bank of the Ganga but the thought of initiation did not at all arise in my mind. Time passed very quickly and the lights on the other bank reflected on the gentle ripples of the river. It was time to catch the launch back to Calcutta. There was a happy lot of passengers returning from Belur. Nirmal Dhar enquired whether I had spoken to anyone about my initiation. He became a bit excited when he learnt I hadn't. But he consoled me by saying it did not matter, for he had spoken about it to some of the swamis.

Perhaps the next morning, the manager of the hotel in which I was staying told me I was wanted on the phone. The call was from Belur. I was informed that my initiation would take place that morning.

Fortunately my friend appeared just then. I had bathed and together we went to the flower and fruit stall nearby for some fruits and flowers, for I was to take these along with me. I reached Belur about 10.30

a.m. and sat on the large bench on the verandah facing the courtyard. I remember the swami in the Math office who was just on my right making kind enquiries. It was sometime after that I was taken up to Mahapurushji's room. I was asked to sit on a thick white woollen carpet on the floor below his bed. Mahapurushji was very old and unwell at this time. He looked very grave as he sat on his bed. He repeated the mantra bit by bit and told me to repeat it after him till I could say the whole correctly.

When I left the room I entered the office opposite where Revered Buddha Maharaj sat at his desk. There were others also in the room. Dr. Ajit Ray Choudhury, a well-known figure in the Math who was attending on Mahapurushji, was sitting on a mat on the floor. He invited me to sit beside him. Suddenly one monk came from Mahapurushji's room and told me, 'Go and give your guru-dakshina to your Guru.' I returned quickly to Mahapurushji's room and found him sitting on a chair. I placed in his holy hand a few rupees I had in my pocket and these he very graciously accepted.

When I visited the Advaita Ashrama in the evening I was told by the monks there that I should have taken my lunch at noon at the monastery as it is customary to receive from my Guru's plate a portion of his prasada. This I did the following day. I sat at a little table in the same verandah where I had first met Mahapurushji and partook of the sacred food of the monastery and a portion of my Guru's prasada which was sent to me from his own plate. While I was eating, Mahapurushji came out accompanied by an attendant swami. He stood by the table, enquired how I liked the dishes. I certainly enjoyed the dishes. I spent the whole afternoon in the holy atmosphere of the Math and returned to Calcutta in the evening. From then on I visited the monastery every now and then, sometimes by bus and sometimes

by boat or launch.

Once I bought a beautiful large garland of roses intertwined with ferns and carried it to the Math by bus. When I took it to Mahapurushji and placed it near him, I felt a little uneasy that I had not placed it around his neck. But he immediately asked the swami attending him to offer it to Sri Ramakrishna in the shrine. On another occasion I took to him a beautiful bouquet of roses in half bloom. Nirmal Dhar accompanied me. Mahapurushji took them in his hand and looked at them with pleasure and appreciation. Then he turned to me and said, 'May your life be as beautiful as these roses!'

I had the pleasure of making the trip to Belur once with Swami Ashokananda, then the editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*. We went by launch from Howrah. Some monks from the Advaita Ashrama were also with us. The Ganga, that moonlit evening, seemed like a silvery dream. We all went to pay our respects to Mahapurushji. He seemed to me to be in a grave mood on this occasion, as he sat at one end of his bed. His words were addressed to me. He told me with great emphasis to be pure and to serve humanity. He then told Swami Ashokananda to repeat to me what he had said, in case I had not followed him.

I saw M. after my initiation. There were many visitors that evening. A few monks also were there. M. came towards me and took my hand in his. The warm clasp of that affectionate hand has remained with me ever since. He gave me a seat beside him. How happy I feel after these long years to think that I had the privilege of sitting beside him! He was glad to know of my initiation and said that I was now a twice-born, I had taken a new birth.

I returned to my service soon after, but remained there for only a few months. At

that time I had a strong desire for Yoga and its methods of living a spiritual life. I was desirous of finding a suitable Buddhist monastic centre in the eastern hills. So, I roamed about the hills. I was walking about when I found a Buddhist monastery far down the hill. I went down but I was immediately attacked by two dogs of the monastery which came barking loudly towards me. I stood still where I was. Just then two Buddhist monks came out and drove away the dogs. I was taken down to their monastery. We sat together for some time and I mentioned that I would like to spend the night at the monastery but I was told that the priest-in-charge of the monastery had gone out marketing and they were unable to grant my request. So I went back to the road and continued my walk to the east. Night was coming on and I could not go further. So I had to spend the night on the side of a lonely hill. The next morning it suddenly came to my mind that I might go to Darjeeling as I had corresponded with Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj previously, before I had started on my journey, to find a suitable place where I could stay. So I continued my journey to Darjeeling and reached the river Teesta. I had to walk up the hill which was covered with a tea garden. When I came to the top of the hill I saw a large house, which might have belonged to the proprietor of the tea estate. As I was walking towards this house, I met the assistant of the proprietor who took me to his own house. Then he invited me to his room where a bright fire was blazing in the fireplace. He told his bearer to give me some refreshments, and the bearer soon brought me tea and plenty of snacks which I heartily enjoyed as I had not eaten anything for the whole day and was very tired. Then the assistant returned sometime after and told me that his boss had told him that it would not be possible for him to accommodate me at night because it might create trouble for him. So, I came out and fortunately saw a decent looking house. I called

out to the occupants and they came out. They were two Chinese carpenters. On request they accommodated me in a comfortable room. The next day I set out for Darjeeling and halted at Ghum station where I boarded a train. I reached Darjeeling station, and had to walk down a flight of steep stone steps. Thus I reached the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math.

I stayed in Swami Abhedanandaji's ashrama for a few months. I cherish pleasant memories of the ashrama and of Revered Kali Maharaj who was very kind and affectionate to me. One day, while staying there, I was asked to recite 'The Song of the Sannyasin' on the occasion of their annual function. Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj presided over the function and with great pleasure I recited that poem which was appreciated by him. One day Kali Maharaj told me that I should go to Belur Math as my Guru was living there, and so to Belur I came.

It was a hot summer evening and many monks were sitting outside. I went and met them all. The next morning I went to Mahapurushji. He gave a hearty laugh to see me, dressed in a white cloth and a *gerua chadar*, which I had been wearing in the ashrama at Darjeeling. I came to Belur to stay there, but some senior monks were anxious about my health and food that I would be having there. So they were discussing whether I could go to any Christian monastery. But at the same time I had a strong desire for Yoga as I have already said. So their kind suggestion I could not accept. Belur Math was the best place for me at that time. When these discussions were going on Mahapurushji was sitting just behind me on his bed, and I was quite unconscious of his presence then. For a while there was a lull in the room and suddenly Mahapurushji broke the silence and said in a strong clear voice, 'Stay here!' With these two words the matter

was settled and I felt a sense of relief. I could feel then, that I was now a member of Belur Math and our discussion came to a happy end for me. As I was now staying at the Math, Mahapurushji desired to give me a new Indian name and told his *sevaks* to find out a suitable name to Mahapurushji's satisfaction. But a day or two later, Sailen Maharaj, one of his *sevaks*, conveyed to me the good news that I was given the new name 'Shambhu' by Mahapurushji himself. It seemed that this name satisfied everyone. During our Brahmacharya when we were given a Brahmacharya name by Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj, the then President of our Order, I was also given a name, but Chintaharan Maharaj told Revered Gangadhar Maharaj that I had already been given a name by Mahapurushji and so there was no need to change it. And Revered Gangadhar Maharaj agreed. So I remained 'Shambhu' as I was known before.

While staying at the Math I had to type a few letters to persons abroad and in this regard, so far as I can remember, one day Swami Ashokananda Maharaj gave me one draft of a letter written by Mahapurushji in reply to the enquiry made on Sri Ramakrishna by Romain Rolland. That was a very historical letter where Mahapurushji very briefly but clearly narrated his own experience and understanding of Sri Ramakrishna and where he openly declared, 'I am still living to bear testimony to his great spiritual power.' It was a privilege for me to type that letter which I still remember.

Another day when I was standing one morning on the steps of the little verandah near the mango tree at the Math, Yogin Maharaj came to me quietly and showed me a letter. It was addressed to Mahapurushji, seeking his permission to celebrate Sri Thakur's Birth Centenary throughout the world. The letter was typed and shown to Mahapurushji. He was very pleased to read

it and gladly gave his consent to those swamis who were earnestly eager to celebrate Thakur's Birth Centenary throughout the world. In due time Thakur's Birth Centenary was widely observed.

My first Shivaratri was at Belur. After the night-long worship of Shiva, I went to see Mahapurushji, but the curtain of his door was drawn. As no one was about I tiptoed to the door and caught a glimpse of him sitting on his bed, bent over a pillow on his lap and looking tired and worn-out. He suffered from asthma in his old age. I bowed at the door behind the curtain and noiselessly left. I had just reached the top of the stairs when he called to know who was there. I returned and entering his room saw him sitting upright and looking at me with his face bright and shining. 'How did you like it', he asked, and at the same time he kept beating the two sides of his pillow like a drum. His face became radiant with a spiritual glow as he spoke in such an animated and cheerful manner and there was no trace of the tiredness on his face I had seen only moments before from behind the curtain.

On festive days Belur Math was a moving mass of humanity pouring into the grounds all day; there was hardly room to move. The Math premises were smaller in those days and if it happened to be the anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna one could hardly get out of one's room! From morning to evening a continuous stream of people flowed in to be blessed by seeing Mahapurush Maharaj.

On one such day, the first I had seen, after all the crowds had left and the monastery was quiet again, I went in the evening to see Mahapurushji. I had not seen him the whole day. His room was lighted by a dim blue light. Mahapurushji was alone seated in his chair. I was happy to see him and

bowed at his feet. He said to me: 'This is the blessed day on which our blessed Lord....' but he could not complete the sentence. His voice choked for a while. I could see in the dim light a movement at his throat. Then with an effort he uttered 'Ramakrishna.' On such a day as this his heart must have been overflowing. What could I understand then of the mood he was in? But his heart was overflowing with divine love and one could feel the warmth of that divine love. Such are the treasured memories of those hallowed days!

Mahapurushji was very observant about my health. One morning when I went to have his blessings he told me that if Belur did not suit me, I would be sent to Ramakrishna Mission, Deoghar, Santhal Parganas. He asked me if I knew where it was. I didn't. Then he kept quiet. I forgot all about it but the very next summer vacation, a few months later, I was sent to the Deoghar Vidyapith, which was as congenial a place as I could desire. But I felt a deep pang as I left Belur Math. I was happy at the Math. I felt a sadness in my heart as I was going away from the sheltering care and love of Mahapurushji.

It was good fortune to me to come to Belur at the time I did. The extraordinary atmosphere of Belur Math and Mahapurushji's holy and benign presence and love pervaded the entire monastery. Life was full of joy and all felt safe and secure under his care and shelter. Those were perhaps the most blessed days of my life.

The incidents that I have narrated are very insignificant but they are very precious to me. I can't say what life would have been for me without them. □

The History of the First Orphanage of the Ramakrishna Mission

BR. SANJIB

This report of the first hundred years of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama at Sargachhi, prepared by Br. Sanjib, was communicated to us for publication in Prabuddha Bharata by Swami Anamayanda, its Secretary. We have added some information culled from the souvenir released on the occasion of the Ashrama's centenary and from the General Report of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, March 1997.

Situated far from the madding crowd and untouched by the bustle of the megac cosmopolitan city such as Calcutta, the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama at Sargachhi has a sublime atmosphere. It has completed one hundred years of service to humanity. A direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Akhandananda, is the founder of this Mission's oldest branch centre. In this brief report we try to visualize the century-old history that paved the way for the establishing of such an Ashrama in this locality. We have also tried to touch upon later developments briefly.

After his triumphant return from the West, Swami Vivekananda went from Calcutta to Darjeeling for a few days to balm his jaded nerves. The Math was then in Alam-bazar. When Swamiji left for Darjeeling, Swami Akhandananda felt a quaint emptiness in the Math, and he too started along the bank of the Ganges proceeding northward. Within a few days he arrived at Daudpur (also spelt Dadpur) and found himself in the midst of the famine-stricken people with bodies emaciated on account of starving and with no one to help them. On the holy day of the Annapurna puja, the Swami reached Bhabta and attended the puja in the Chandimandap of the Sannyals of Mahula. Here he was stunned to hear the divine voice

of the Divine Mother sternly ordering him to stay there. The Swami stayed on and, on 15 May 1897, he distributed husked paddy to eighteen people of that village. This has become historically significant for it was the first 'Organized Public Relief Work' by the Ramakrishna Mission that later spread throughout the country and even extended beyond the country's borders.

The Orphanage

By July 1897 the relief work was in full swing. One day at noon, the Swami, when returning from a house, came across a little girl of about five years with a filth-covered body sitting by the door-side of a house and munching dry husked rice. He took her with him to the relief centre where he had the girl bathed and fed with care and affection. In later years Swami Akhandananda, refusing to take charge of orphan girls which task he believed was for educated and kind-hearted women, would remark referring to this incident,

The idea of starting an orphanage first arose because of a helpless girl, but with the opening of the orphanage, we did not hesitate to refuse one of her kind when the offer came. So weak are we, your unworthy sons, O Mother! We lack the capacity to sense you. All we can do is to

pray: Mother, it is Your work, and You alone can get it done.

Be that as it may, the girl left the centre just the next day when her tribal companions came to receive assistance from the centre. This sight left a deep mark on the Swami's heart and he decided to set up an orphanage.

Swamiji who was then at Almora inspired his 'Ganges' (Gangadhar was affectionately called so by Swamiji) with a beautiful letter in which he heartily approved the plan of starting an orphanage. Nityagopal Babu, the secretary of the District Relief Society, also fanned the Swami's intentions. Within a few days Swami Akhandananda got a boy of the Moshahar tribe (a type of Santal tribe) from Berhampur and brought him to his relief centre. The boy had been attacked by pox and the scars were still prominent on his skin. With unmatched sympathy, Swami Akhandananda began to nurse the ailing lad who gradually came round. However, he was finally forced by his relatives to leave the kind Swami. Thus was going on the play of the Divine Mother. Whether the kind-hearted Swami would actualize his plan or he would have to remain content with such a partial and temporary orphanage, was not clear then.

The history of humanity always speaks in favour of every good intention and the Almighty of the Universe at last arranges everything favourably for one who endeavours heart and soul to reach the goal. Rare indeed is such a man whose heart throbs with pain for the afflicted. Few and far between are such in human history whose every drop of blood and tear are shed at the Altar of God in distress. Fortunate was Mahula. Lucky were those few who lived there at that time. History rightly falters for words to narrate that peerless enterprise which Swami Akhandananda showed in a remote rural setting where to no sophistication had reached, where education of any form was a

luxury. When the District Magistrate, Mr. Levinge, was informed of the plan to start an orphanage, he, a British Official, exclaimed with joy, 'Laudable scheme, indeed!' It was 31 August 1897, a red-letter day. Swami Akhandananda got a boy aged 9 or 10 years as his first recruit to the orphanage. His name was Nutubehari Das, a favourite of the Swami. Thus the maiden orphanage of the Ramakrishna Mission came into existence with boundless love for the poor and the downtrodden as its sole asset.

It has been emphasized time and again by Swamiji that money never makes a man great; it is man who makes money. No great work can be accomplished unless it is backed by dedicated men and women with selfless devotion and sympathetic feeling towards humanity. The orphanage at Sargachhi also bears testimony to this eternal principle. Financial handicap was always acutely felt, though some form of help or the other always trickled in from well-wishers belonging to different sections of society. Mr. Levinge first sanctioned an amount of Rs. 100/- and advised the Swami to open a permanent fund. At the same time, the then Maharaja of Kasimbazar, Maharaja Manindrachandra Nandi, also agreed to function as the treasurer or the president of the orphanage. But Swami Akhandananda did not rely entirely on the assistance of such great men and remained constantly engaged in collecting alms from the common people living in the neighbouring areas as well as from friends and families dwelling in several parts of the country. God too helped him as always and privation never appeared in such a magnitude as would necessitate the closure of the much-needed orphanage.

The orphanage was getting along fairly well and within a year of so, the number of orphans reached seven. This created another problem: lack of sufficient space for accommodation in Mahula. Though the Swami

appealed to the *zamindars* for a piece of land for building a permanent house, every attempt drew a blank. At last Mrs. Madhusundari Barman, donated 4 bighas of her *zamin-dari* at Sargachhi, and to meet the acute problem of residence, she lent one of her houses at Shibnagar, to where the Ashrama was shifted in October 1898 after the Durga puja. Here the Ashrama functioned for about 15 long years. Thereafter, through the efforts of a well-known lawyer, Rai Bahadur Baikunthanath Sen, a 50 bigha plot of land was obtained from Hajis Maharam Ali and Abdul Aziz at Sargachhi, and the Ashrama was shifted to this land in the year 1913 or thereabout.

From the beginning it was a case of incessant struggle of a soldier who dedicated every moment of his life for the uplift of the helpless by the hundreds. To the villagers he became known as 'Dandibaba', a name that fitted him well. To the orphan boys who had neither parents nor any other close relatives to shower love on them, and who were despised and left uncared for, the Swami with a staff (*dandi*) was like their real father (*baba*)—to them he appeared to carry an eternal kinship of many lives. As recorded in the report books of the Ashrama, we find ninety names and brief descriptions of those early orphan inmates who came under the shelter of Dandibaba's unbounded love. Swami Akhandananda has himself painted for us a vivid picture of how he looked upon his orphan boys as embodiments of the divine and behaved with them. In the preface to 'A Short History and Appeal' of the Ashrama (1914), Swami Brahmananda noted,

It would take a volume to give an account of all the persecution he [Swami Akhandananda] has had to bear for the sake of fulfilling the vow of doing good to people. In the midst of these trials the Swami, depending wholly on God's

grace, joyfully washed and cleansed with his own hands the sick Narayanas. He would pick up from the streets the boy Narayanas clothed only in rags and begrimed with dust and dirt, and while bathing them recite with great feeling the Vedic *mantras*.

The orphans received opportunities for education in the Ashrama School and they were even provided training in several handicrafts. Under the direct guidance of Dandibaba they tilled the fields of the Ashrama and became able to grow various vegetables. Their courage, simplicity, honesty, discipline and overall humane behaviour, which they inherited from their Dandibaba, were causes enough to receive applause from the villagers and others who occasionally visited the Ashrama. As far as our knowledge goes, three of the enlisted orphans are living today: Sri Sushil Mukherjee, a retired Officer-in-Charge of West Bengal Police; and, Sri Ranjit Kr. Das and Sri Biswaranjan Das, two brothers, presently retired from service. The writer got an opportunity to talk to them. They still cherish sweet memories of Dandibaba's love and affection. Mr. Mukherjee admits that had there been no Dandibaba for him at that time, he would have been lost in oblivion. These expressions undoubtedly unveil a history replete with many marvellous reminiscences of loving care and motherly affection.

The Buildings

At the present permanent site of the Ashrama, activities began to expand rapidly. By the year 1918, a brick building housing the library, the orphanage, and the office room had been constructed. The district magistrate provided financial aid for the construction of a road linking the Ashrama to the Highway as well as for levelling the ground in front of the library.

Though Swami Akhandananda was

averse to the idea of building a temple, preferring instead to worship God in the human body, a two-storey temple building was constructed in 1929 housing a shrine dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji in the first floor, and a store and workers' accommodation in the ground floor.

In 1933, the Binode-Kutir was constructed with financial assistance from one Binodebehari Dey of Calcutta for the use of inmates as well as for guests. The second storey of this building was completed in 1953. The building has a small garden, Binode-kanan, with an artificial hillock.

Educational Activities

Swami Akhandananda had started a lower primary school in the Ashrama premises in the year 1900. The school which started receiving aid from the district board from 1901, was upgraded successively to upper primary and middle English levels in 1904 and 1906 respectively. However, it had to revert to its original lower primary level for want of funds and space. It was again raised to upper primary and middle English levels in 1930 and 1940 respectively and was recognized by the Government in 1944. The school was expanded to a high school in 1956 and since the introduction of the 10+2 system in 1978, the school functions as a full-fledged high school with agriculture, science and arts streams. The upper primary school was converted into a junior basic school in 1956. Two more junior basic schools were opened in 1959 and 1962.

The Ashrama has been running two Students' Homes since 1960.

A residential junior basic teachers' training institute came into being in August 1958.

A night school was started in 1903 by

Swami Akhandananda himself in order to educate the masses who could not attend the day school. This continued to function till 1945. Another such school functioned from 1941 to 1945 at Pakuria near Berhampur. The Saradapitha at Belur aided a rural child literacy programme in the local village from 1951 to 1953, and a Government-aided adult education centre functioned from 1956 to 1978.

An industrial school with agriculture, weaving, tailoring and carpentry sections was supported by Maharaja Manindrachandra Nandi of Kasimbazar and functioned for several years since 1900.

Health Services

It was to serve the sick and the indigent that Swami Akhandananda had taken up work in the area and to this end he continued to work till his last days. At the outbreak of cholera in this region, Swami Akhandananda with his assistants came to the service of the patients irrespective of their caste or creed. At the same time he made continual efforts to educate the people in public and personal hygiene. In 1900 the victims of flood and epidemic at Ghoga in Bhagalpur received the Swami's care.

In 1911 a charitable dispensary was opened at the Ashrama itself with generous aid from Maheshchandra Bhattacharya and Batakrishna Pal, both well-known businessmen of Calcutta. A brick building was later constructed to house the dispensary with help from Haji Mohammed Yosuf of Beldanga. The dispensary renders both allopathic and homoeopathic treatment.

Other Activities

Swami Akhandananda had started the Ashrama library with many old and valuable books collected by him. In 1956 a public library and reading room was started with Government aid.

In commemoration of Swami Akhandananda's taking up the vow of service on the occasion of the Annapurna puja, a yearly festival at the Ashrama was instituted by the Swami himself. This along with a puja in memory of Swami Akhandananda continues to be held on the same day every year.

Sri Gopalkrishna Ghosh, a devotee from Dinajpur, had established an Ashrama along with a primary school and a charitable dispensary at Mahampur in 1914. Under the care of a brahmacharin trained at Sargachhi, this functioned till 1926.

The Sub-Centre at Berhampur

Swami Akhandananda used to visit Berhampur regularly and inspire the local youth to live a life of service. A small rented house was used by the Ashrama workers when they came to collect rice and funds. In 1923 a service centre with a charitable dispensary and a night school (which functioned till 1927) was started here. Later in 1938, Swami Premeshanandaji Maharaj, the then secretary of the Ashrama opened a branch centre at Berhampur with a mind to propagate the ideas and ideals of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Sasankasekhar Sannyal of Berhampur donated a plot of land for this sub-centre in 1953. By 1955 the sub-centre moved into a brick building constructed at this site.

Resume

Today, the Sargachhi Ashrama has no orphanage. It was closed by Swami Premeshanandaji Maharaj for some unavoidable reason. It is not impossible to restart it under the present condition of the Ashrama and its surroundings. Yet, the Ashrama maintains free of cost a number of poor boys who are selected from the neighbouring areas on merit basis. They are all provided scope for their study and they are also guided in shaping their lives so that they can make themselves healthy citizens in the truest sense of the term.

At present (as per General Report, 1997) the Ashrama has (1) a high school with 615 boys, (2) three units of junior basic school with 620 boys and 271 girls, (3) a residential junior basic teachers' training institute with 38 trainees, (4) two school hostels with 119 inmates, (5) a charitable allopathic-cum-homoeopathic dispensary which treated 14,443 cases, (6) seven libraries with reading rooms (15,597 books, 22 periodicals and newspapers), and, (7) a students' home with 4 college students and weekly religious classes at the Berhampur sub-centre. The centre renders help occasionally to the poor and the needy. And it conducts worship in the Ashrama shrine as well as observes the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna and other religious celebrities.

The orphanage with which the Ashrama started is now merely a chapter in the pages of the history of the Ashrama. If any historian however ever writes the history of human compassion to the helpless and the hapless, the Sargachhi Ashrama's orphanage must find a prominent place highlighting the boundless, selfless dedication of a God-centred, penniless Sannyasi, who once came to people in distress, comforted them and shared in their afflictions, and who by truly serving God in Man showed to posterity what was expected of them under similar conditions—for their own good and for the welfare of the served. □

Obtaining a human body which gives a glimpse of My nature, a man, by practising the religion of love to Me, realizes Me, the All-bliss Paramātmā, who dwells in his mind.

—*The Last Message of Sri Krishna*, ch. XXI, śloka 1

Mind According to the East and the West

DR. RAMAKRISHNARAO VETURY

Dr. Vetury is not new to the readers of Prabuddha Bharata. In this article, which we serialise, the author presents an analysis of the mind and the body.

Descartes, the father of modern western philosophy, left behind a legacy of the mind-body problem in the philosophical thinking of the West. A philosopher, mathematician and scientist in one, Descartes had great faith in human reasoning and he decided to 'devote his whole life to the culture of (my) reason'.¹ At the same time, he was a great believer in God and a devout practising Catholic. Russell rates Descartes' work in philosophy and mathematics as of supreme importance, and in science, creditable.²

Descartes' Problem

Descartes was greatly impressed with the certainty of mathematical knowledge. Said he, 'I was specially delighted with mathematics on account of the certitude and evidence of reasoning....'³ He set it as his goal to develop philosophy on similar lines. In mathematics, one starts with a few simple self-evident truths (axioms) and the consequences of such axioms under precisely stated conditions are deduced. The results are conclusive, beyond question or doubt. Is it possible to arrive at a body of such self-evident, simple and irrefutable truths in philosophy and make them the foundation of

absolutely certain knowledge? he asked himself. This effort, he thought, was worthwhile because 'philosophy is perfect knowledge of all that man can know, as well for the conduct of his life as for the preservation of his health and discovery of arts'.⁴ Descartes, the rationalist, prayed for divine illumination, vowing a pilgrimage to the shrine of Loretto if his prayer were answered.⁵ So he was seeking a body of self-evident truths which anyone with a little common sense and reasoning will accept readily.⁶ These truths should be beyond question raised by even the worst sceptics. Descartes adopted the following method in his quest.

The Method

To achieve the goal he set before himself the following guidelines:⁷

1. 'The first was never to accept anything as true which I did not clearly know to be such... (and to accept) only what was presented to my mind so clearly and distinctly as to exclude all ground of doubt.' This meant that every item had to be subjected to close scrutiny and doubt before it was accepted. This is the famous Cartesian doubt.
2. 'The second is to divide a problem into parts and study each detail.' This, in

1. Descartes, 'Discourse on Method', *Man and the Universe*, Philosophers of Science, (New York: Modern Pocket Library, 1954), p. 182. [Hereafter, *Discourse on Method*].

2. B. Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1974), p. 544. [Hereafter, *Western Philosophy*].

3. *Discourse on Method*, p. 167.

4. Frank Thilly, *A History of Philosophy* (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1973), p. 302. [Hereafter, *History*].

5. *History*, p. 301.

6. *History*, p. 303.

7. *Discourse on Method*, pp. 175-6.

science, assumed the form of study in isolation.

3. 'The third is to conduct my thoughts in such an order that commencing with the objects, the simplest and the easiest to know, I might ascend little by little....'

4. Finally, to make the study thorough and complete.

Results

The first result of this search is that the most certain thing we can know is the mind. Even the body can be doubted. There are dreams, hallucinations and mirages—all well known for their falsity. Our senses have often proved that they can mislead us. So one cannot be too certain about the body. It is subject to doubt. So is the external world. But while we are doubting the body, in the very process of doubting we are thinking. Thinking is done by the mind. So, though doubting the body or anything in the external world, the activity of the mind is certain; otherwise, there is no doubting. Mental activity is possible only if we exist. So, '*Cogito ergo sum*' or 'I think, hence I am.'⁸ This is an indisputable fact in western philosophy, an absolutely certain, simple metaphysical truth. From this simple truth Descartes established the criterion for truth mentioned 'that whatsoever is clearly and distinctly perceived is true'.⁹

Next he proved to his satisfaction that God exists. We need not go into his reasoning behind this. He used this truth to prove that the body and the external world can also be inferred to be real. The reason stated by him is that God cannot be a deceiver to present us with a false world.¹⁰ Descartes believed in creation by God as given in the *Genesis*. But, it must be noted that the reality of the world can only be inferred while that

of the mind is intrinsic. God is necessary for the reality of the world, but the reality of the mind is a self-evident truth. So, mind and body are totally different. Descartes proposed extreme dualism between mind and body. The body is a machine obeying the laws of physics. The animal body is an automaton. Man's body is similar but possessed a soul and that made some difference from the animal body which, according to him, did not have a soul. For Descartes there are three substances—God, mind and body. God is the absolute substance; mind and body are relative substances, fundamentally different from each other. The attribute of body is extension and that of mind is thought. The two are totally different and immiscible and we know the substances only by their attributes.¹¹

Descartes used the word 'think' in a very wide sense: 'A thinking thing is one that doubts, understands, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, imagines as well as feels.'¹²

Corollaries

The Cartesian theorem of extreme dualism between mind and matter leads to some inevitable corollaries, a term we might borrow from mathematics.

1. First, if mind is more certain than the body, then mind can exist without the body.

2. Secondly, if mind and body are fundamentally different, matter can be isolated from mind and can be studied objectively. The subject (the perceiving mind) and the object (the perceived world of matter) can be separated. This led to much progress in science till the beginning of this century when the very

8. *Discourse on Method*, p. 186.

9. *History*, p. 307.

10. *History*, p. 307.

11. *History*, pp. 308–09.

12. *History*, p. 310.

progresses made in science offered some difficulties.

3. If mind and body are so different, there cannot be any interaction between the two. Mind cannot cause changes in the body nor can body induce changes in the mind.

4. If mind cannot even lift our finger, then man should not be held accountable for his actions.

Some of these corollaries have been explicitly stated by the followers of Descartes.

The Mind-Body Problem

With the above corollaries, the mind-body theorem of Descartes developed into the mind-body problem because there arose some difficulties. Descartes himself had to explain feelings, appetites, passions and emotions which indicated a close connection between mind and body. In certain cases the relationship is almost causal. If the body is hungry, does the mind feel the hunger? Descartes did not clarify some of these points. His Dutch disciple, Geulinox, tried to explain this kind of interaction as apparent by his famous two parallel clocks analogy. If two clocks are so arranged, one to show time only and the other to strike the hours only at the right time, we get the impression that the clocks have mutual influence, which is not true. Such an arrangement has been made by God between the mental and the physical events giving us the wrong impression of mutual interaction. Russell calls this theory 'very odd'.¹³ Thus, the mind-body interaction has become a problem demanding a solution.

13. *Western Philosophy*, p. 545.

Developments in Science

Developments in Quantum Physics and recent advances in allied fields have indicated that an objective study of the universe is a dream. In the microworld, the methods of observation interact with the observed and it is only the combined picture that we get. Objective science has thus been proved to be a myth. We no longer have observers isolated from the observed, but only participants in a study. This consideration led Schrödinger, a Nobel laureate in Physics and a great admirer of the Upanishads, to assert that the discrimination between the subject and the object is to be abandoned and to state that the subject and the object are one.¹⁴ Sherrington, a physiologist, said, 'Physical science...faces us with an *impasse*, that mind *per se* cannot move a finger of the hand.'¹⁵ Schrödinger finds it a horrible antimony to say that 'we are not the doers of our deeds. Yet we are praised or punished for them.'¹⁶ Modern science—physics and physiology—is not happy with the results of excluding the mind from the world. Schrödinger advocated the Vedantic doctrine of identity as he called it (Advaita) to get over these difficulties. He suggested 'a bit of blood transfusion from Eastern thought into the outlook of Western sciences, but with caution'.¹⁷ So it is worthwhile looking into what the East says on mind and we shall begin with the Upanishads.

(to be continued)

14. Ramakrishnarao Vetur, *Upanishads and Modern Thought* (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1986), p. 56.

15. Erwin Schrödinger, *Mind and Matter* (Cambridge: University Press, 1958), p. 43.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 43

17. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Knowledge and Ignorance in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy

DR. SANGHAMITRA DASGUPTA

'Knowledge' and 'ignorance' are known to be contradictory, like light and darkness. But in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, 'ignorance' is interpreted as the 'separative knowledge' and 'knowledge' as 'integral knowledge'. The author, who is from Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, says in this article that 'the analysis of these concepts in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy will be incomplete unless it is done with reference to his view of the evolutionary process in which "knowledge" emerges out of "ignorance". "Ignorance" is thus said to possess the potency of "knowledge".... There is no fundamental difference between "knowledge" and "ignorance"; they are only apparently different.'

It is commonly held that 'knowledge' and 'ignorance' are two mutually exclusive concepts. And this commonsense view is supported by our popular linguistic usage according to which ignorance is the absence of knowledge. When I say, 'I am ignorant', it means, 'I do not know'. But 'knowledge' and 'ignorance' have a completely changed connotation in the philosophical writings of Sri Aurobindo¹, as discussed below.

'Knowledge' is not simply informative in character; it is rather 'Integral Knowledge' or 'Transformative wisdom', terms which cannot be understood apart from his views of 'Integral Reality' (Saccidānanda).² The

term 'Integral Knowledge' (vidyā) has been used in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy as 'the power of Truth-Consciousness which is itself the consciousness of Reality'.³

The term 'Ignorance' (avidyā) is an indistinguishable associate of 'Integral Knowledge' (vidyā). These are conceived as two powers of the One Divine Consciousness. Avidyā is called 'separative knowledge' which functions through seven-fold instruments: five outer senses, sense-mind (manas) and reason (buddhi); and vidyā means the 'knowledge by identity' which functions in the realm of supra-mental consciousness. It seems to be the natural tendency of 'separative knowledge' to reform itself gradually and give place to 'knowledge of identity'.

It is to be noted here that the analysis of these concepts in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy will be incomplete unless it is done with reference to his view of the evolutionary process in which 'knowledge' emerges out of 'ignorance'. 'Ignorance' is thus said to possess the potency of 'knowledge'. It is the limitation and condensation of knowledge

1. It is to be noted that in any discussion of Sri Aurobindo's view on philosophy, the term 'philosophy' does not mean an abstract intellectual enterprise or a fascinating frivolity of thought. For him philosophy is an integral view of life. What he had realized through 'Yogic practice' was expressed by his luminous intellect in his writings. Any discussion of Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of 'ignorance' and 'knowledge' must be carried out in that perspective.

2. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1990), p. 566.

3. Ibid.

which creates the possibility of ignorance or error. But it is a purposeful plunge of the Absolute for its cosmic play. This 'Integral Knowledge' is neither an intellectual concept nor a speculative ideal. From the human standpoint, it may be said to be a progressive discovery; from the standpoint of the 'Integral Reality', it is a progressive revelation of Truth. Since there is 'involution' of the 'Integral Reality' out of 'cosmic play', there is an 'evolution' or the process of re-finding. Sri Aurobindo calls this process of re-finding a transition 'out of the seven-fold ignorance towards the seven-fold knowledge'.⁴ He states that 'ignorance' comes as a product of the evolutionary movement when mind is separated from its spiritual and supramental basis. It is a 'part of the movement of the One, a development of its consciousness knowingly adopted, to which it is not forcibly subjected but which it uses for its cosmic purpose'.⁵ As regards the origin of 'ignorance', he refers to 'Tapas' or 'conscious-Force in action on a separative movement of the Force'.⁶

According to Sri Aurobindo, a little reflection on our inner self would at once reveal the nature of this conscious-Force or Tapas, the essential principle of energy. By inner self of a human being, from the ordinary and commonsense standpoint, we mean the sum of the apparent movements of consciousness of that being. But behind this apparent movement there exists a vast stream of consciousness that remains beyond the scope of our awareness. It is said to be the psychic entity of the subliminal self (the super-conscious), the sub-conscious being. It is the passive aspect of our consciousness which is hidden in all our movements. But man, during his superficial workings, is not aware of this greater existence. When

man engages himself in his superficial works, a power of exclusive concentration builds a wall of separation from his greater consciousness which is the source of all movements. This power of concentration as described by Sri Aurobindo is 'a limited practical self-oblivious power'. It is this power through which man is capable of absorbing in his own movement and forgets the rest of himself. This is the very nature of 'ignorance'. The term 'ignorance' has been used in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo only in this sense of a self-limiting knowledge by which man forgets his real nature and experiences complete self-forgetfulness while he is engaged in practical works.

The 'ignorance' works even in the ordinary action of man. This power of self-forgetfulness enables an actor to forget himself. He identifies himself with the particular role he plays. Without this self-limiting power he cannot be a successful actor.

To Sri Aurobindo, as it is evident from *The Life Divine*, philosophical enterprise should not confine itself to purely intellectual system, as it is generally the case in many modern European philosophical systems. It is a spiritual discipline where supra-intellectual intuition comes first, and rational analysis next. It is also true that such supra-rational intuition cannot be reduced to a logical language which often uses the logic of 'is' and 'is not'.

Sri Aurobindo, perhaps seeing this, recognizes various levels or degrees of spiritual realizations. For him supra-rational state involves a vision of the 'Integral Reality', and the world is perceived in the unity of a self-evolving and self-revealing Absolute. Our perceptual knowledge is only an immediate awareness of the external facts. Reason is an advanced step upon perception. But rational analysis functions in mental constructs through piecing together of the perceived

4. Ibid., p. 584.

5. Ibid., p. 567.

6. Ibid., p. 580.

data. Obviously for Sri Aurobindo, reason has its own limitations although it is a help in correcting perceptual shortcomings. Collecting data on the basis of empirical enquiry, reason confidently generalizes and draws inferences. But this is not all for human progress in knowledge content and spiritual improvement.

Man's spiritual aspiration exceeds the scope of reason in aiming to know a thing directly in its integral unity, in its essential being from within. Such intuitive knowledge is called by Sri Aurobindo 'knowledge by identity' in order to distinguish it from what he calls 'separative knowledge'. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is said to be a product of knowledge rising progressively from intellectual notions of reality to an immediate knowledge by identity. Vidyā in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy means this intuitive knowledge or the knowledge by identity whereas avidyā is separative knowledge. Even the fact of evil is conceived as an incident in the progressive realization of Good and not as a refusal of the eternal Goodness and perfection of the Absolute.

In the hierarchy of evolutionary movement, 'ignorance', in this sense, is taken to be a means to 'knowledge'. Evil is not something illusory. It is real at a particular plane of consciousness; it is said to be the superficial mental consciousness. It *cannot* be said to be an absolute negation of Goodness, since the deeper self within us sharing the higher truth is a perfect safeguard against it. In view of this 'ignorance' can only be called an expression of 'the self-limitation of the Absolute'.

This self-limiting ignorance, as it is stated, is considered by Sri Aurobindo as a power of the Absolute. The world is a progressive self-expression, a manifestation of

the Absolute. And without this ignorance, the object manifestation of the world would not be possible or could not be done at all in the way in which it is being done. The Absolute is *not* really limited by putting forth ignorance. It is through this power that the deeper eternal self throws itself out as the adventurer in Time. It is the natural play of the Absolute, throwing itself into a cosmos relation. Therefore avidyā or ignorance does not create any real limitation to the Divine consciousness. Both knowledge and ignorance are needed for the purpose of the Divine's self-manifestation and self-limitation. Both are powers of the Citśakti inherent in the supramental knowledge of Brahman (Integral Reality).

There is no fundamental difference between knowledge and ignorance; they are only apparently different. Vidyā is the principle which regulates oneness or unity whereas avidyā is the principle of difference or multiplicity. Ignorance is considered one of the possible poises of relation of the Absolute in its manifestation, a relation of the infinite in its various finite actions, a natural capacity of the one to enjoy oneself as the many. Ignorance is only an expression of 'the self-limitation of the Absolute'. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, 'saccidānanda descends into the material Nescience and puts on its phenomenal ignorance as a superficial mask in which it hides itself from its own conscious energy, leaving it self-forgetful and absorbed in its work and forms'.⁷

From this, it appears that Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of knowledge and ignorance is an indispensable part of his massive structure of metaphysics which yields an insight into the reality. □

7. Ibid., p. 501.

An Examination of Non-Duality

RICHARD CHAMBERS PRESCOTT

'The pragmatic application of the simple idea of non-dual cognition frees us of so much of life's inherent misery due to the design of dualism', says the author in this thought-provoking article. Highlighting the possibility for every soul to attain to the non-dual state, the learned author argues, 'You can become one with the non-dual state even if only for a short time. It is to be one with the cause of all, for are you not in reality part of the all of which the non-dual state is the cause. So why should it be an experience which is for just a few?'

One of the most pragmatic tests of the non-dual state is that it helps one to get over the confinement of *yes* or *no* thinking. There is always another potentially better equation to life instead of simplistic *black* and *white*, *yes* or *no* thinking and that equation always comes out of the potent power of the non-dual state of consciousness; when *yes* and *no* meld together and something new, a fresh possibility arises.

The pragmatic application of the simple idea of non-dual cognition frees us of so much of life's inherent misery due to the design of dualism. This is religion's ultimate point, really speaking. Non-duality is like a ubiquitous gravity continually pulling everything toward itself. Life is just always and naturally regenerating and moving towards this unification of the psyche in order to relieve our psychic anxiety caused by the stress of two opposites.

Dualism makes us think that consciousness is dual when it is not. Things that stir up in consciousness have the appearance of dualism due to the *stirring up* idea and the *settling down* idea, but consciousness itself does not experience any change in itself. We may think of death as unfocussed consciousness without the intensity of body and mind identity and that life is just the reverse, the intense focus of consciousness with the body-mind crisis. Dualism is really the *only* crisis we experience; *the crisis of the appearing of dualism in consciousness*.

Consciousness itself is not changed by life or by death and once this is known, something extra-ordinary happens in the turn-about of the mind. One becomes self-assured in a reality divinely intended, but still the psyche may contain superstitious conceptions of heaven and hell due to dualistic archaic mythological inputs into the mind.

The psyche naturally loves non-dualism as it makes the psyche joyful. Joy is an emotion that comes out of non-dual awareness. Non-dualism is the free flight of thought that touches the face of the Great Reality, not bound or tied up by traditional thinking. And freedom always brings joy. So non-dualism may be said to be the free part of the mind or rather that innate freedom and never the broken reality within our consciousness, which we have named love.

In reality, all dualism reflects non-dualism as two halves become one whole. It would appear to us that dualism is really the playful expression of non-dualism, not an evil nor an antagonist as most religious systems might have us believe. *Dualism is a natural expression, not one to be feared.*

The sage psychologist, Abraham Maslow, in his text *Toward A Psychology of Being*, gives an insight of profound depth to this:

If, for the sake of argument we accept the thesis that in peak experience the nature of reality itself may be seen more clearly and its essence penetrated more profoundly... that

the whole of Being, when seen at its best and from an Olympian point of view, is only neutral or good, and that evil or pain or threat is only a partial phenomena, a product of not seeing the whole world and unified, and of seeing it from a self-centred or from too low a point of view.

Any thoughtful person would easily realize that our psychological systems and constructs are also dualistic, the masculine-feminine divisions and dualisms are the most obvious, as we have come to separate, rubricize, label and divide emotional, mental, intellectual, physical and even spiritual properties as being one or the other. This has caused a great deal of misery in the spectrum of what is just natural human consciousness.

Then there is the etiological level of dualistic causes inside, behind, or in the background of the psyche itself. This logic of causes and effects is the dualistic causality of one's own state of positioning, psychologically and spiritually speaking, as an idiosyncratic and unique human being who is living within a conjunctive relationship to the universal body and being of all life. At last, the non-dual source of it all comes into clarity as an excellent conclusion being the alogical spiritual bliss peak carried ever forward and higher.

Only our fixed dualistic self-conscious identity limits us by its fearful anxiety over letting go of dualistic comfort and ever opening up to this restorative non-dual power of life. It is to embrace the passion of all life as being oneness with the great ubiquitous fact.

Our non-dual moments are seldom recognized for what they are because of the powerful gravity or pull of dualistic mental training. We so seldom open ourselves to the divine entirety and more often find our minds in a state of fixation on human personality and its ties as absolutes, when there is so much more than just this. *Instead of*

enjoying those very reachable non-dual peaks, we engage in the mere phenomenal surface of life: all its opinions, abuses, intrusions and invasions into our consciousness which pulls us in the direction devoid of peace of mind. It starts early in life, if not perhaps even during the soon-to-be divided womb consciousness, our common beginning, our equally shared source point.

Everything is metaphorical of the non-dual state. All dualism poetically melts into the creative reflex of non-dualism within our lives. And as this is so, the mother/father complex is one of the most primal symbols of this dualism, which to the child is the most complete symbol at that time of the non-dual state, which has already been established to be love. The child gets its ideas of what love is from that primal parent dualism.

Whether young or otherwise, it seems to be a persistent reality in the consciousness of most people. Before birth, the child is in something of a non-dual state. Then entering this world still filled with the memory of that non-dual feeling of love, that love becomes broken by the usually fragmented and dualistic relationship of the parents. A deep and earth shattering schism in the core of consciousness then takes place. The memory of once felt non-duality becomes lost. This carries over into other dualities.

Deeply and sincerely ask yourself if true non-dual consciousness can die, as it never enters the superficial surface dualism of a thing that is born and therefore must die. With this in mind, do I need to explain the deep-rooted dualistic spiritual/sexual complex that curses and perplexes human beings as they struggle with their mortal human emotions and their immortal spiritual sentiments?

Maslow's subjects of study, those who have had peak experiences, pour out their discoveries in answer to this contradictory dualistic problem, 'As he gets to be more purely and singly himself he is more able to

fuse with the world, with what was formerly the not-self; e.g. the lovers come closer to forming a unit rather than two people, the I-thou monism becomes more possible...' It really seems to me the non-dual answer is a most sagacious emotion of getting to the direct feeling about anything. Getting out of the 'yes and no' mind, then getting into the sweet mood of oneness where the 'I' and 'you' complex melts away into the sweet poetry of life.

One answer is that the 'I' consciousness may assume non-dual consciousness in various proportions. Examples are given by Ramakrishna, the loving sage of the goddess Kali. That of a fish swimming in the sea of non-duality. That of a pitcher which has sunk in the sea of non-dualism but still retains the ego form of the pitcher. The fish ego metaphor is not filled within by the sea water of non-duality like that of the pitcher. Then there is the salt doll metaphor of ego consciousness which goes to the sea of non-duality to measure the depth of the water and simply melts away entirely!

All these examples measuring the depth of relation of 'I' consciousness with non-dual consciousness and all are indeed measurements. *But the sky of non-duality can never be explained in terms of the relative dualistic ground below.*

In this light, the three traditional states of consciousness—waking, dreaming and deep sleep—may offer no help whatsoever and might even be an obstruction to the feeling experience of pure non-dualism. How can you measure sky in relation to the ground? *Non-dualism cannot be measured by dualism, states of consciousness or anything.* No ground reference will do. You cannot describe this non-dualism in relative terms, but you may feel it.

As Ramakrishna explained, 'As is your mood, so will be your gain'. That says it very well. As the mood of your own poetic depth grows, you will realize there is no dualism between sky and ground. The sky touches

the ground everywhere. And further out, what is thought of as the 'sky' encompasses completely the orb of the 'ground'. So where is that duality now?

No amount of psychic fission nor fusion will contact this feeling. I like these expressions, self-fusion and self-fission, as the continually dual processes of the psyche. That of splitting apart in fission from the Great Fact and that of bringing or melting together with the Great Fact. Life may be reduced to these primary dual processes as what we are all doing. Yet resolution comes with the non-dual acceptance, or rather more accurately, an inward non-acceptance of both, a letting go of these two processes so that psyche turns towards the non-dual state. It is the depth cognition of the 'one', the both, and something more, something else, the non-dual state, which puts no conscious contact or recognition of primary value importance on dual processes as answer, conclusion or final meaning.

You can become one with the non-dual state even if only for a short time. It is to be one with the cause of all, for are you not in reality part of the all of which the non-dual state is the cause. So why should it be an experience which is for just a few? It is inherent to all as the deep oneness of life, out of which the thinker and the thought dualism appear.

The ideas of getting it or having got it pull one's consciousness away from actually having it. That is, as a tangible peak experience. Both having and not having are ego illusions, ego distortions, or entanglement in the process of being stuck only in recognition of the ego. This is a psychological situation of relaxation and stress in our consciousness itself, producing consciousness itself, producing inner struggle. But the non-dual state relieves that struggle and the psychosomatic tension that it causes.

Maslow, in describing these peak experiences in his study of American individuals, states:

The greatest attainment of identity, autonomy, or selfhood is itself simultaneously a transcending of itself, a going beyond and above self-hood. The person can then

become relatively egoless. The augmentation of his research makes this all the more approachable, possible and reachable. □

Swami Vivekananda—The Orator

(Continued from page 195)

phists, leaders of the Brahmo Samaj and the Christian missionaries.

What harm does it do to the Christian missionary that the Hindus are trying to cleanse their own houses? What injury will it do to the Brahmo Samaj and other reform bodies that the Hindus are trying their best to reform themselves? Why should they be the greatest enemies of these movements? Why?—I ask.

The honesty, audacity and straightforwardness of Vivekananda's speeches remind us of Gandhi, though the latter was far less rhetorical than the former. In the praise of his land and religion he spoke in the vein of Pericles in his great speech in 'The Praise

of Athens'. In disseminating Sri Ramakrishna's teachings he is a modern prototype of St. Paul, who was the first missionary apostle of Christ. His oratory has the burning flame of Satan's undaunted resolution (?) and a sense of urgency and conviction. His oratory bears the influence of Victorian preachers. He has the dramatic power and sincerity of Henry Newman. He argues like him exploring arguments with gentle insistence so as to show the self-contradictions of his opponents. In sincerity of feeling and intensity of clerical eloquence Swamiji is no less than Taylor, Wesley and Newman. His introspective honesty, controlled irony, modulated flow of prose and the assimilation of a scientific spirit in his religious discourses ranks him as great as any of the great Victorian preachers. □

'Maharaj, I want to see God in everything. Kindly tell me how this can be possible.'

'My son,' replied Swami Shivanandaji, 'you will have to see God in your own heart first. How can it be possible to see Him in all things outside unless you can see Him first within yourself? When one is firmly established in one's realization of Him as the Self, one can see Him everywhere inside and outside; then only will one attain the state described as 'the whole universe is full of Brahman'.

'Can this state be reached through the perfection of moral qualities, like truthfulness, kindness to all, love, endurance of all suffering without a murmur, etc.?'

'Yes,' confirmed Mahapurushji, 'the mind becomes purified when it is disciplined through morality; and the divine vision dawns on that pure mind. But I cannot accept the view that the divine vision comes as the result of excellence in moral behaviour. It is through constant devotion and meditation that God becomes gracious and reveals Himself in the heart of the devotee.'

—For Seekers of God, pp. 240–1

Reviews and Notices

THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION: Swami Ritajananda, translated from French by John Phillips; publ. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004; 1996; pp. 112 + xvi; Rs. 20/-.

A craze for meditation is observed in contemporary eastern and western society in general and in business executives and professionals in particular. But meditation aims at being more than just a technique employed to obtain physical and mental well-being of a person. It is something much more profound. It is a powerful tool for evolution of the Self, for transformation of consciousness; it is a complete technique for mastering our mind, and it could take us into that realm where all our so-called problems vanish and we attain peace.

As very rightly said in the Introduction to the book, Swami Ritajananda's book is a perfect guide that takes us by the hand, shows us the highways and byways of meditation, and helps us to overcome the variety of impediments on the path. Essentially, this book contains talks of the Swami originally given in French and translated into English by his associate, John Phillips.

The book has eleven chapters, encompassing various topics such as 'What is Meditation', 'The Value, Object and Preparation for Meditation', 'Different Techniques', 'Importance of Mastering Prana', 'The Part Played by Guru and Mantra' and 'Various Opinions on Meditation'.

The gist of all the chapters is: (a) Meditation could be on the form of one's Ishta, or on sound, or it could just be repetition of a sacred mantra, (b) The person who wants to meditate must develop complete self-mastery and must also feel an intense love for his spiritual ideal, (c) The process of meditation is not intellectual nor is it a simple practice of concentration. It is a very deep concentration developed with all the love the devotee is capable of mustering towards an object of meditation into which he can plunge forgetting the outside world completely, (d) Why must one meditate?, in order to realize the Supreme, to attain knowledge of our true nature, to know oneself as pure consciousness transcending the mental instrument expressing as thought, reason and 'I'-consciousness, (e) Preparation for meditation requires: (1) a strong desire to attain a satisfying ideal for one's life, (2) becoming witness to one's thoughts which help a person to stay calm enabling him/her to sense the inner

silence, (3) physical and relaxation exercises, and (4) keeping a fixed time for practising meditation, (f) *Pranayama* is the technique for mastering the flow of cosmic energy through one's body and mind, (g) A person who has spent his life in the quest for spirituality and reached the goal can become a guru. And total surrender to such a guru is absolutely necessary for spiritual progress of the disciple, (h) *Japa* should be continued until the point is reached when the *mantra's* vibrations make us feel its power.

Chapter 10 contains extracts culled from various Upanishads. Opinions of Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother and Swami Brahmanandaji on meditation are given in the last chapter.

Thus, this book is a real treasure for spiritual aspirants aspiring to peace and bliss while leading an active, meaningful life. The Swami expresses himself with great clarity and covers the whole theme of meditation with a rare concentration, achieving a surprising economy of treatment. We must congratulate the Publication Department of Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, for adding one more feather to their literary cap.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia
Junagadh

URGE FOR SYNTHESIS: D.L. Bijur; publ. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kulapati Munshi Marg, Mumbai 400 007; 1996; pp. 172 + viii; Rs. 100/-.

The book under review, attempts to make a startling departure from the beaten tracks, traditional views and interpretation by showing a way of synthesis of science, religion and philosophy. The present-day trend of compartmentalization and fragmentation has forced the author to envisage a trend of synthesis—synthesis of all existence, of all that is perceived, felt, said, written, done and thought of. To him such a synthesis of everything should be based on a sound synthesis of science, philosophy and religion.

To arrive at this synthesis in everyday life, the author has put forward the use of single world language, use of standard text-books all over the world right from the first year of the primary school to the last year of Bachelor Degree course; and the necessity of one word/letter/symbol representing all Existence derived from synthesis of different religious symbols. He has also elaborated on the themes, concepts and practicability of his hypothesis of 'synthesis'. Many interesting

reflections are made on Creation Process, Rebirth and Evolution, Synthesis of Yoga as also on the Strategy for the Future in a few of the succeeding chapters.

The remaining chapters deal with physics, and social, educational, economic, political and spiritual welfare of the society. Again, the author's arguments revolve around his working hypothesis of 'Synthesis'. Here he pinpoints how the causes of conflicts can be eliminated, how total integration of humanity can be achieved, and how the spiritual progress of men and women can be promoted to enable them to become superhuman.

In the first as well as in the last chapter, the author urges experts in various fields and people at large to join hands and to come up with better ideas and solutions to the problems of the world.

The author has really come forward with a novel and workable hypothesis. His approach is frank and sincere and discussions are lively. This book should find a place in the racks of every thinking person and as urged by the author, people should think in the direction of synthesis as well as of consensus in every field of human endeavour. The author should be congratulated for displaying passionate involvement with the subject and the originality of his ideas. The cover page and printing are excellent.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia

CENTENARY SOUVENIR COMMEMORATING THE ADVENT OF BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA AT ARUNACHALA; Sri Ramanasram, Tiruvannamalai 606 603, India; Sept. 1, 1996; pp. 252+vi; price not mentioned.

The enchanting eyes, the compelling glance of the one clad in loin cloth, an effulgent face brimming with love and wearing a gentle white beard—these features of Bhagavan Sri Ramana on the cover photo first captivate one's attention. Below this picture is the fairyland of Tiruvannamalai—temple and town bedecked with lights—as if to remind us that Sri Ramana, even from his infancy, knew that Arunachala was a brilliant heavenly abode. At the top of the cover is a simple portrait of the hill itself. It takes us to Sri Ramana's question: How many have been deluded by your seeming appearance as an insentient hill and, thinking of you, have been swallowed alive, O Arunachala?

The twenty-five pictures in the book (including the double spread colour plate of Arun-

achala) are certainly the highpoint because of the magnetic pull of Sri Ramana's eyes in every portrait that depicts him and because each picture silently tells us a hundred stories and reveals the wonder of the supreme state in which Sri Ramana revelled. The 'miraculous' narrative of how these 'Writings in light'—these photographs—came to be taken and have been preserved despite many tragedies that befell them is engagingly and intimately recorded by Dev Gogoi, while Boyd reveals how working with these pictures was in itself an intensive and uplifting spiritual practice.

The Souvenir opens with a '*Suprabhatam*' to Sri Ramana in Sanskrit by Swami Shantananda with a translation into English. This is biographical and, for those familiar with Sanskrit, lilting. Next, the significance of the advent of Sri Ramana to Arunachala and the celebration of the event's hundredth year are dwelt upon by Swami Prakashamayana and G.V. Subbaramayya in articles which also highlight Bhagavan Sri Ramana's 'relationship' with Arunachala. Some other articles also rest on this theme. Besides these, articles on the teaching of Sri Ramana and reminiscences about him make up the Souvenir. It is a collection of as yet unpublished articles, some selections from the archives of Sri Ramanasram and certain articles selected and repeated from *The Mountain Path* and *The Call Divine*. A reading with a critical mind-view may draw comments on the apparent arbitrariness of this selection, the obvious editorial jumps at places and the many typographical errors. Yet, the over-riding impression is one of love for the Sadguru, an exploration of his teachings and an evoking of Sri Ramana's presence through reminiscences, all put together in a spirit of dedication. While there are touching moments of experiences and flashes of insight in almost every article, a few are indeed rare gems. Saroja Krishnan's recreation of the bliss that she tasted upon holding Sri Ramana's feet, his response to her simple faith and of his absolute compassion and simplicity in his treatment of a wounded pigeon linger in one's thoughts. K. Swaminathan's 'The Unity of Surrender and Self-enquiry' is a masterpiece on the teachings of Sri Ramana; clear and lucid, succinct and comprehensive, it leaves no room for doubt. With Master Nome's 'Timeless Presence' the extraordinary power of Ramana's teachings, the experience that Ramana is, stands revealed drawing us into that very bliss, as it were, at least for a few moments.

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SURA, MAN AND SOCIETY—PHILOSOPHY OF HARMONY IN INDIAN TRADITION; Dr. Raghunath Ghosh; publ. I.B. Chakraborty for Academic Enterprise, 249/a East Kodalia, New Barrackpur, 24 Parganas (N) 743 276; 1994; pp. 122+xii; Rs. 115/-.

This is a compact and concise work with insights into musicology and explication of the concept of 'harmony' in the context of Indian tradition. The main objective of this small but sensible volume is to present a general account of melody (*sura*) from multiple dimensions—not only in Indian music but also in the life of an individual and his relation to society as well. Throughout the text, the word 'melody' (*sura*) stands for harmony irrespective of the field—be it music or the way of life. Though melody (*sura*) has its origin in the different musical notes like *tāla* and *laya*, etc., it always transcends the boundary of these. The harmony in individual life, according to the author, means a transcendence of the boundaries of necessities and self-interest signifying a linear, balanced and upward movement as it happens in *sura* of musical works. To support his contention, the author rightly gives relevant citations from the works of Sāṅgadeva, Rabindranath, Udayana and Magha, and the *Gītā*.

However, the difficulty arises when the same word *sura* has been used for gods (*devas*). The author gives an interpretation for this usage also. The word *deva*, for the author, stands for 'one who is shining' (p. 96), or that which is harmonious is godly. The author commendably suggests a possible extension of this key concept of musicology to our life. He argues, 'The manner of producing harmony among different notes (*svaras*), the cause of melody, can be extended to the ordinary business of human life. If harmony is maintained in human life, a man becomes '*sura*' after bringing about '*suratva*' in him and thus he can make his life melodious. Hence, the concept of '*sura*' may not be confined to the technical musical world alone, but it can also be pertinent to human life as well' (p. 24).

A very relevant question may arise here: How do we achieve the harmonious way of life? The author has the straightforward answer: 'Just as *tāla* and *laya* are essential for the emergence of melody, so restrictions and prohibitions serve the

purpose of making our lives melodious' (p. 65). It is indeed undeniable that a disciplined life with prohibitions and restrictions is necessary for harmony in an individual's life as well as to ensure societal peace, stability and progress. This suggests our exercise of freedom with certain limiting conditions. Freedom does not mean that we are free to do anything in an irresponsible manner. Absolute freedom is not desirable, because absolute freedom with no restrictions and prohibitions leads to utter chaos. But the question again arises here: How do we know that a particular set of restrictions and prohibitions is harmonious for both the individual and the society? The author is silent about such an epistemological issue. Concepts like 'prohibitions' and 'restrictions' signify some external force imposed upon the individual life.

Moreover, the author tries to develop a relevant connection between the concepts of '*sura*', '*sat*' and '*amāyika*'. By '*amāyika*' the author means 'non-artificiality' which is very close to the concept of 'real' or '*sat*' in India's philosophical heritage. But a modern scholar of Upanishadic philosophy may not feel comfortable with this interpretation. Here *māyā* does not stand for something artificial or unreal, rather it stands for the inexplicable fact of experience in terms of pure categorization by '*sat*' or '*asat*'.

Chapter VI, though it contains lucid presentation of the content, does not seem to be very relevantly associated with the main thrust of the book. However, the contribution of the author has been visible in the concluding two pages of the volume. He rightly argues in favour of maintaining harmony in individual's life, family life, societal life and in overall relation with the environment. Harmony brings beauty in every sphere.

The printing is neat although it has some lapses here and there. The references are wide ranged. Some lapses may not escape the notice of a meticulous researcher. In page 96, a *mantra* is mentioned explaining the stipulated meaning of different letters in the word 'Durga' without including its source in the list of references. The book would be appreciated more had the author enhanced its value through the incorporation of a glossary of important technical terms.

The book, despite these limitations, I think, will be useful to students, scholars and to all those interested in philosophy of harmony in the Indian tradition.

Dr. Dilip Kumar Mohanta